

TALES
FOR *
THE *
MARINES



BY *—*—*
ROBERT * *
BLATCHFORD

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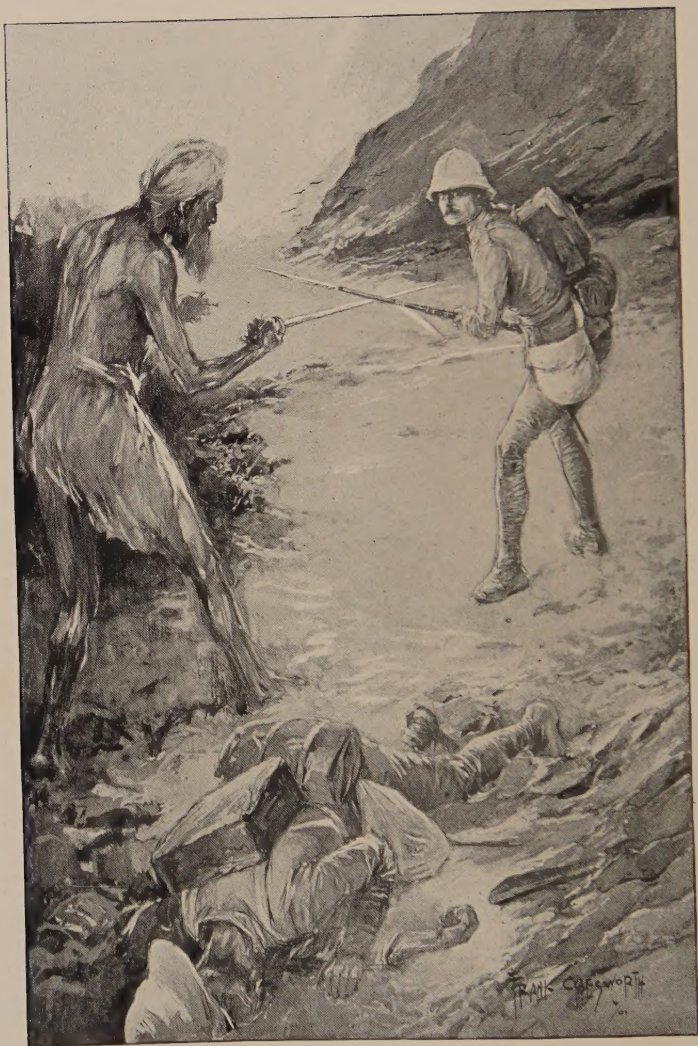
H. G. Atkinson.

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TALES FOR THE MARINES



"And while we were doing this I found myself thinking of all sorts of things."—THE MOUSETRAP.

TALES FOR THE MARINES

BY ROBERT BLATCHFORD

AUTHOR OF "TOMMY ATKINS"

"A SON OF THE FORGE" "A

BOHEMIAN GIRL" "JULIE" ETC.

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DEDICATION

OF ALL THE GIRLS THAT ARE SO SMART

THERE'S NONE LIKE PRETTY

SALLY

FOREWORD

A FAVOURITE amusement of soldiers in the barrack-room is story-telling, or, as Tommy Atkins calls it, "spinning cuffers."

The time for telling "cuffers" is after "lights out," when the barrack-room is in darkness and the men are in bed.

The form of procedure is much the same in all regiments. Private Noaks requests Private Stokes to "spin us a cuffer." Stokes calls "Attention!" and then says "Boots!" to which the men reply in chorus, "Spurs!" The "cuffer" then begins, the "spinner" testing the interest and wakefulness of his audience by interjecting the word "Boots!" at such intervals as may seem advisable.

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TALES FOR THE MARINES

THE SCRUMPTIOUS GIRL

PRIVATE PETER STUMPIT'S STORY

RYAN THE BEAUTY. Shtumpit, avick, shpin us a cuffer.

Stumpit. Shon! *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Pay attention to the story o' the Scrumshus Gel. This cuffer's gospel truth; or as near as you can expect to get it.

It happened early in the twenties, an' was told to me by Hairy Hiliffe, the Pioneer, as had it from his own father, as was struck dead for tellin' the truth. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. You must know that the Old Scuts was lyin' near the borders o' the Rajah of Jeypoor's territories; an' the colonel an' officers o' the Scuts an' the rajah got as thick as thieves, an' was continual a-dining' an' visitin', turn about,

an' what more nateral than they should take to gamblin' to kill time, seein' as 'ow in Inja Time 'as a pair o' club-feet, and moves always at the slow march. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Stumpit. Wherefor they played 'igh an' they played low, an' they played 'ell generally ; but the rajah 'e always seemed bored, an' the 'igher the stakes the boreder 'e got, until at last 'e ups an' says as European games were too slow, an' 'e'd be glad if the officers would pass their words for to take 'im on at a country game, for a stake worth 'avin'.

Well, old Strapper, the colonel o' the Scuts, wasn't goin' to be bluffed by a native, so 'e passes 'is word. But when 'im an' 'is officers learned what the rajah 'ad let 'em in for, they put up their thumbs right solemn-*ly*.

For, says 'e, " You Sahibs 'as the fine men," 'e says, " an' I 'as the fine women. Let the stakes be a woman on my side, an' on your side a soldier. If you wins, the woman is yours. If I wins, the soldier enters my service."

" But," says the colonel, " the soldiers isn't my soldiers ; they belongs to John Company."

" Then," says the rajah, " I will leave the men I win out on parole, an' you must buy their discharge, for," says 'e, " you 'ave passed your word," an' 'e grinned somethin' 'orrible.

"An' what's the game?" says old Tommy Strapper.

"The game," says the rajah, "is a trial o' strength atween one o' your soldiers an' one o' my women." An' with that he unfolded the rules o' the game; an' a very rum game it were. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. So, to make a long story short, the game was to set an English soldier on sentry in the coort-yard o' the rajah's pallis, the rajah an' the colonel seein' fair through keyholes, an' then to send in a pretty girl to coax the soldier's musket off him. The gel to use no weepons, nor drugs; nothin' but female bedevilments, fair an' square. An' if the gel got the arms off him within the hour, the man was forfeit; but if not, the colonel took the gel. Of course, the sentry was to know nothin' of the game, much less as 'is commandin' officer's eye was on 'im: so that 'e'd nothin' to stand on but 'is solderin'. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Well, when old Strapper an' the officers tumbled to the game, they looked seven ways at once, for they knew the Old Scuts pretty well, an' devil a man of 'em was fit to stand his corner. But at last they picked out a raw-boned, hard-faced, canny Scotchman, named Angus M'Allister; an' they put up a prayer, an' sent 'im into action. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Stumpit. Angus was posted at twelve midnight, an' there was the colonel an' the rajah, with their eyes glued to a brace o' keyholes ; an' there was Angus p'radin' up an' down, an' never a move out of the enemy till the *ghurry* struck the half-hour. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Stumpit. Soon as the *ghurry* struck the half-hour, the curtains opens, an' out comes that *Scrumshus Gel !*

Directly old Strapper sees 'er, 'is eyes strikes a light, an' the clock of 'is 'art goes backwards. Directly Angus sees 'er, 'e opens 'is big mouth, same as if 'e'd been for doctor's inspection.

She—was—the—most—*scrumshus gel* as ever fell in love with a lookin'-glass. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Stumpit. She 'ad an 'ed of 'air like a mermaid ; long an' black an' curly. She 'ad flesh like strawberries an' cream, eyes like flash-lights, a figure like a hangel, and a mouth like a cut cherry.

There was more live woman to 'er than ever old Tommy Strapper see on one pair o' feet, an' yet she were as dainty as if she'd growed in a hot-ouse on a stem.

She was dressed in a loose sort of—what's-his-name, made o' goold cloth, as you thought you could see through, though you wasn't sartin, an'

round her waist she wore a belt o' silver chain, with a diamond clasp. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Yum, yum!*

Stumpit. So Angus stood to attention, an' stared as if 'e'd been struck so, and the gel turned half-left, an' brought her bonny head to the "port," an' looked at 'im under 'er be-yewtiful black eyebrows, an' sighed.

Angus told after, as she did it as if 'er eyebrows 'ad been bows, an' 'er eyes the arrers, an' she'd been takin' aim to shoot 'im. Anyhow, she did shoot 'im. She shot 'im dead at the first fire, an' she knowed it.

She stood still long enough to let the sigh melt away—as a sportsman does the smoke of 'is rifle—an' then she come forrard, movin' as if she'd been steppin' to a slow waltz; an' 'er splendiferous eyes on Scotty's face, an' 'er whole self seemin' to shine an' ripple all over, as a graylin' does swimmin' slow up stream; an' at last she halts right opposite to him, where 'e'd stood like a moonstruck Lascar, an' there she stops with 'er arms 'anging down, an' 'er long eyelashes a-lyin' on 'er cheeks like black silk fringe on a peach; an' 'er breast heaves, same as two little smooth waves a-risin' outer deep water when the sea's calm, an' she gives another sigh. Angus said one o' them sighs an' a slice o' brown bread would feed a soldier for a day.

Well, the rajah says, soft, to the colonel: "I bet you a thousand rupees she disarms him afore the *ghurry* strikes once;" but old Strapper couldn't speak for the water-brash.

As for poor Angus, 'e stood as stiff and as stoopid as if 'e'd been a wooden Scotchman outside a snuffshop, an' the silence was that strong as you might a' heerd the grass grow.

Well, the scrumshus gel lifts 'er eyes up, very, very slow, like the sun risin' out of a silver lake, an' clasps 'er 'ands under 'er dimpled chin, an' looks as if she was a-goin' to say the Doxology, but never speaks. An' Angus, he gives a little short sigh; an' old Strapper says, "Damn."

Then the gel took a pace of about six inches forrard, an' stood a-tiptoe with 'er little 'ands clasped under 'er ear, an' 'er throat a-swellin' an' 'er breast a-heavin', an' 'er eyes a-glowin' an' a-sparklin' an' expandin' an' contractin'; an' at last she opens her cherry-ripe lips to speak.

An' there was old Strapper in a blue funk, an' Angus fixed with his mouth ajar an' the 'ole weight of 'is body on the forepart of 'is feet, as if 'er words 'ud be butterflies, an' 'e must stand by to catch 'em.

The rajah 'e 'umps 'isself be'ind 'is keyhole, an' the gel gives a curly-wurly smile which made

Scotty feel as if a cold watch-guard was bein' twiddled down 'is back, an' she spoke in a voice sweet enough an' wooin' enough to charm an oyster out of 'is bed; an' the words she said was —*Boots!*

Ryan the Beauty. The curse o' Cromwell on yez, Pether; go on wid yer business.

Stumpit. An' the words she says was, "*Oh!* you *pretty* soldier."

An' at that Angus looked as silly as a Dutch doll, an' all 'e could say was "Hech!"

Immejately after, the gel takes a teeny step nearer, so that he could feel the warmth of her flesh, an' smell the scent in her 'air, an' she says, "Pretty, pretty soldier: *my* soldier," an' opens 'er arms. But directly Angus made to fall into 'em she sprung back like a fencin' instructor, an' she screws 'er mouth into the shape of a moss rosebud, and moves 'er face as if she meant to bore a hole in 'im, an' 'er eyes all the while a-shinin' like the dawn star in a dewy mornin'.

Thereupon Angus went rampin' ravin' lunny, an' forgot the Mutiny Act, an' the Board of Orders, an' 'is Catechism, an' 'is own Christian name; an' she sees 'e's a beaten man, an' she takes a hold of 'is musket; an' she kisses 'im.

An' the next thing Angus knew he was swayin' about in the middle of the lawn, feelin' around for something to hold on to, an' with a taste o' June

roses an' new honey on 'is lips, an' a swarm o' bees a-buzzin' through 'is dizzy head; an' 'is arms took off him, and the scrumshus gel clean vanished. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Next minute Angus gets his wits awake, an' with the fear o' God an' a general coort-martial afore 'im, rushes through the curtains at the end o' the green, an' tumbles over 'is own musket.

There it stood in a silver lance-rack, with the bayonet fixed, an' on the bayonet a strip o' paper with these words: "As the tides to the moon an' the steel to the magnet, the fool is to the woman."

Naterally Angus was glad to get his arms back; but he was jumpin' wild at bein' fooled by a gel, an' you may be sure 'e didn't show 'is billy-doo.

Of course, there was a tremenjous clamjamfry in the officers' mess, and old Strapper ate the nails off his fingers, an' swore till the messroom smelt o' sulphur. But 'e'd give 'is word, an' 'ad to stand by it. The rub was which man to send next. The colonel knew the Scuts pretty well, an' after seein' the scrumshus gel 'e knowed 'e could tell how long this fool-rogue of a game would last by simply tottin' up the number o' rank an' file on the p'rade state.

"It's all up, Cutler," 'e says to the senior major; "the mermaid 'll beat us in detail, and

we'll march back to head-quarters like the fools we are, with never a musket to trail behind us."

But old Cutler 'adn't seen the scrumshus gel, an' 'e said M'Allister was a soft-hoofed Highland cuddie, an' bade the colonel cheer up, an' send an older man.

So as 'e said, so was it done. They sent up an old buff-stick with four badges, an' a figure like a rake, who'd been twice married an' had a wife an' seven children in barracks; an' he mounted guard, an' the colonel went to his key-hole, an' the scrumshus gel came in, an' bent 'er black silk bows, an' aimed at 'im with 'er diamond arrers, an' waltzed forrard an' sighed, an' said, "Oh, you pretty soldier!" an' kissed 'is old dundy-grey shiver-defreeze moustache, an' took 'is musket off 'im, an' left it with a billy-doo on the point o' the bayonet or ever the *ghurry* struck the quarter.

An' as it was with Angus an' 'im, so it was with five other old die-hards that follered 'im; an' the rajah smiled an' smiled, an' the colonel swore an' swore, an' the officers' faces looked as if they was twelve hours at sea in dirty weather.

An' at last old Strapper says to the doctor, says 'e, "O'Grady," 'e says, "we'll 'ave to try the rules o' contraries, an' send an Irishman."

"Bedad," says the doctor, "it's of no use sendin' the bhoys on such a sarvice at all, colonel dear

ye moight as good marrch the whole Catholic church-party into the pallis, an' turn them over to the rajah, lock, stock, an' bar'l," he says, "for sorra the one of them but would surrindther his sowl to a camel if it had a long frock on it."

Then old Strapper stamped about the orderly-room as if he'd got a pair o' new boots on, an' says 'e, "Damnation, O'Grady," 'e says, "are we to chuck up the sponge to a Christy-minstrel king? An' where's your Irish wit?" 'e says.

"Aisy, colonel," says the doctor. "Me Oirish wit's in the only place where ye'll foind such a commodithy, and that's in me Oirish head, acushlah. An' let me tell ye 'tis the Oirish brigade that'll save this day," an' then the doctor clucked an' spluttered, an' chow, chow, chowed, an' yow, yow, yowed all over the shop, an' couldn't speak for laughin'. But at last 'e gives old Strapper the griffin, an' directly old Strapper got the elevation 'e said the doctor was a genius, an' 'e laid 'isself down on the orderly-room floor an' howled till he broke 'is braces. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Now, what was it the doctor said to the colonel? It was just this: "Colonel," 'e says, "the Owld Scuts are all men, an' be that token they're all fools whenever a woman can get within range of 'em."

"Bah!" says old Strapper, "did I send for you

to tell me that? The question is : Have I a man in my regiment can face this witch an' not melt like sugar in a punch-bowl?"

"Ye have not," says the doctor; "but, colonel, dimond cut dimond, an' if ye mean to beat this mermaid at her own game, take a hint from me."

"What is it?" the colonel says.

"Just this," says the doctor; "keep yer men in barracks, an' send up a woman in regimentals."

With that old Strapper laughed, as I said, an' then 'im an' the doctor lays their heads together an' decides to send for Kate O'Flatherty, an' ask 'er to save the honour of the ridgment.

Kate was one o' the knapsack breed, born an' reared in the Old Scuts, wheer 'er father 'ad been a sergeant. She was tall enough for the Grenadier company, as thin as a lance, an' with more corners on her than there is on Salisbury spire. She'd a head of hair like a windy sunset, an' a mouth like the Bolan Pass. 'Er feet was as flat as long-scrubbers, an' she'd a suet-pudden complexion, an' two little black eyes like currants, but so sharp they seemed to prick you.

Well, Kate ambushed her charms in the uniform o' the Scuts, an' was posted in the coort-yard o' the rajah's pallis, with no farther orders but to walk about in a brisk an' soldier-like manner, an' do nothin' contrary to good order an' military discipline. But when she was posted

old Tommy Strapper came an' whispered to her that if she turned up trumps he'd promote Angus M'Allister full sergeant next mornin', an' order 'im to marry Kate the day after, an' all the officers should dance at the weddin', an' the 'appy couple should 'ave a thousand rupees, an' a month's leave to spend it in.

"An', Kate," 'e says, callin' 'er by 'er Christian name, "I cannot tell you what it means," 'e says, "but for the love o' God and the regimental colour, defend yourself against all comers."

"Sorr," says Kate, "I don't know phwat manner o' thing this sacrit sarvice may be; but, be the grace of God, sorr," she says, "if the Earl of Hell an' all 'is sheriffs should come forninst me they'll mate their match;" and with that she slings 'er rifle into the shoulder, and with a smile that would frighten a bull-dog, she begins her sentry-go. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. So me bold Kate marched about in quick time, as stiff as her own ramrod, an' the colonel and the rajah took up position, an' the *ghurry* struck the half-hour, an' the curtains slid silently back, an' there stood the scrumshus gel.

Kate was powerful surprised at the sight of her, for, in the first place, she wasn't at all what she expected, an', in the second place, Kate would

have preferred the distinguished guest she'd mentioned to a pretty woman any time, an' it was easy to see by her manner that she wasn't at all pleased. For she began to bridle and sniff like a house-cat when it sees a strange dog comin' up the garden. An' she gives the gel a hard stare, an' comes to the "port," an' calls, "Halt, who comes there?"

Kate challenged so fierce, an' 'er voice 'ad such a scissor-edge to it, that the girl was startled, an' forgot to pose 'erself afore the curtain an' take aim with 'er bows an' arrers. An' old Strapper sniggers, an' says to the rajah, "A thousand rupees," 'e says, "as my sentry holds his arms."

"Done," says the rajah, and then the scrumshus gel pulls 'erself together an' says in a voice like a whisperin' angel comfortin' a babe in its sleep, "Friend."

With that Kate looks as hard as a brick chimney, an' comes down to the charge with a tell, an' says, in a tone like the scrape of a key on a slate, "Shtand, friend, or I'll be afther pokun fun at yez wid me sharrup steel wit."

Well, the gel looks a bit queer at this new kind of a welcome, an' the expression of cold-drawn contempt on Kate's ugly phiz, and she turns on the curly wurly smile, an' sidles round to 'er right front, sayin', "Coo, coo, coo," with such seducin'

sweetness that she nearly drew old Strapper through 'is keyhole.

But Kate was built on different lines, an' what tickled the colonel only made her mad, so she beats the double attack with her solid Mullingar foot, an' says, in 'er most disdainful manner, "Coo, coo, coo," she says, an' it was like a crow mockin' a nightingale. "Coo, coo, coo," says Kate, "ye bowld-face besom, do yez take me for a pijun?"

Thereupon the gel takes a pretty little run forrard, like a thrush on a lawn, an' turns her meltin' eyes up at Kate's freckles, an' clasps 'er baby 'ands under 'er right ear, an' says, "Oh, you *pretty* soldier."

Well, at that Kate fairly crackled with scorn. "Don't be makin' shape's eyes at me, ye mechanical wax-work," says Kate. "I'm not a papeshow."

The girl smiles again, and puts 'er 'ead a one side like a canary, an' makes 'er mouth into a rosebud, an' proceeds to play at borin' a hole in Kate, who was about as flirtative a woman as a marble angel on a tombstone.

"Boy Saint Anthony," says Kate, "if the thing o' the fair isn't afther thryin' the comether upon me. Git along home wid yez, Jezebel; phwat are yez doin' here in yer bathun-gownd? Black shame on yez; this is not a shwimmun-bath."

Well, when old Strapper heard bonny Kate open fire, he laughed till his teeth came loose; but the rajah turned more colours than the dog-star on a winter's night, an' the sweat run down 'is face as if 'e'd been the village blacksmith.

The gel stood firm, an' rolled 'er sparklin' eyes, an' swelled 'er throat up, like a blackcap on an apple-branch, an' began gurglin' out, "Gloo, gloo, gloo," with enough o' warm tenderness to melt a snow-man.

But it didn't melt Kate a fragment. She got as raw as a sore heel, an' says she, "Ye gogglin', gugglin', gawky crature," she says, "if yez come widin rache o' me Oi'll—Oi'll *shmack* yez." An' she lifted up 'er big left hand, as red and bony as a shin o' beef, an' the gel jumped back with a ballet-dancer's bound, an' stood wide eyed an' pantin' like a scared deer.

Then Kate laughed, with a noise of shakin' a bag o' marbles, an' the colonel hitches up his sword-belt an' chuckles, an' the rajah says something through 'is teeth in Hindustanee; an' the gel drops a curtsy like a countess an' runs out of the coort-yard an' comes back with a lute.

Kate gives a scornful snort, and shoulders 'er arms an' commences marchin' up an' down, an' the gel kneels on the grass and sings an' plays; an' every note o' the lute was like a kiss, an' every

word she sang was like a cuddle, an' Kate moved back an' to about as much concerned as if she'd been the running man at Wimbledon.
Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. After a time the *ghurry* strikes the quarter an' the gel sighs an' puts down the lute and begins to dance. She danced nautch-girl fashion at first, showin' 'er limbs an' figure, an' makin' great play with her long black 'air; but Kate stood at ease and made cuttin' remarks.

"Bad cess to yez," said Kate, "it's the saucy slut yez are. Phwy don't yez go an' dance to that disreputable owld foostherer of a rajah? D'yez hear me, imperence? Go an' cut yer scandalous capers afore yer wrinkled-faced owld guttapercha king."

When the rajah heard that, his eyes turned innards, an' 'e chawed 'is bottom lip like a quid; but old Strapper was delighted.

Well, the gel danced quicker an' more free. She danced afore Kate like a kitten chasin' leaves, like a titmouse on a twig, like a butterfly over a flower-bed, or a troutlet in a weir, with her little feet a-trippin' an' glancin,' an' 'er white arms wavin,' an' 'er 'air spread out like a black silk fan, an' 'er eyes invitin', an' teasin', and coaxin', an' 'er goold frock a-foldin' an' spreadin' an' shadin' an'

shinin', till you couldn't tell whether it hid more than it showed, or showed more than it hid; an' ever as she danced she kept drawin' in nearer an' nearer to Kate until the goold skirt flicked the gun-sling, when, flop! down went Kate at the "receive cavalry," an' the gel sprung back, an' for a minute stood lookin' wishful an' timid at Kate, as a child will look to know, "Did I do that nicely?" an' Kate put on a scowl that would wither a rice field, an' she says, sarcastic, "Is that *all*, me Lady Godiva? Are yez not afther woindin' up by turrnin' a cartwheel, or standun on yer head,—seein' yez 'ave gone so far already?"

Then the gel drops down on 'er knees, an' clasps 'er 'ands, an' big tears runs down 'er face, an' 'er eyes looks as deep as the Lake o' Lucerne, an' she sobs out, "Forgive me! I love you," an' then she smiles like a welcomin' angel at the Goolden Gate, an' shows two rows o' teeth like milk-stones, an' a mouth as clean an' clear as a claret glass.

But Kate says only, "Ye're a liar," an' frowns 'er rusty eyebrows into an Austrian knot. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Time was a-flyin', an' the gel knew it. She crept in on 'er knees a bit nearer the point o' the bayonet, an' gives a look o' beseechment at the O'Flatherty, an' says in a fearsome whisper, "Save me, soldier, save me, save me."

An' Kate curls 'er nose, which was naterally adapted for that purpose, an' makes answer: "Save yez? Phwy don't yez see a docthor, if there's anythin' wrong wid yer insoide?"

An' old Strapper says to 'imself, "She's a jewel," but which o' the ladies 'e meant I leave you to guess.

You understand the articles of agreement said the game must close at 12.30 a.m., an' it was now close on the time. The gel saw the case was gettin' desperate, an' she stood up an' pouted, an' asked, in a downcast way, "Don't you think I'm pretty?"

That roused Kate's dander. "Pretty, is ut?" she says, with a snarl. "Why, ye wasp-waisted, shape-eyed, shrivel-shanked, face-painted, schrim-shankin' nanny-goat, sure I'd make a purtier gurrll out of a butcher's shop." An' then Kate stopped for breath, an' flattered 'erself that was rather neat. But the fault of it was the gel didn't understand one word of it, but just thought Kate looked a bit pleasanter, an' had been payin' compliments. So she 'olds out 'er arms an' warbles in 'er throat, an' says, "Kiss me, kiss me, kiss me."

That finished it. All at once the devil put it into Kate's head about Angus M'Allister havin' been on this very post, an' she left the hold of her musket, an' jumped up with her eyes snappin'

like red-hot metal, an' her yaller tusks stickin' out like a sea-horse, and she lets up an Irish yell, an' the scrumshus gel darts for the door like a bee for 'is hive, an' the colonel gives a buck-jump, an' the *ghurry* strikes the half-hour. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. The rajah 'e turns to the colonel, an' says 'e, "Is that a soldier?"

"Yes," says old Strapper; "that's an Irish soldier—the best soldier in my regiment, begad, an' if you won him he'd damn'd soon be in command of the pallis."

So the rajah see he was done; for, by rights o' the articles o' war, 'e'd lost the scrumshus gel; but old Strapper 'ad seen enough of 'er, an' so made a great favour of exchangin' 'er back for the men what he'd lost, and both sides cried quits.

Kate's was a great weddin', an' when it was over, an' the bride passed by the quarter guard, old Moses Appleby, as was the second to fall under the charms of the scrumshus gel, he stood to the shoulder to Katie, an' ever after that it was an understood thing as she never was to pass a sentry, nor be passed by a soldier o' the Old Scuts, without receivin' the salute as was due to 'er rank as the best man in the 'ole bloomin' battalion.

As for Sergeant M'Allister, I 'ope 'e was 'appy ; but it is said as all through 'is service, if you wanted to 'ear Angus fetch up a sigh out o' deep soundin's, all you 'ad to do was to mention the scrumshus gel. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Ryan. 'Tis a good lie, Pether, an' wan that improves wid the tellin' !

THE MOUSETRAP

CORPORAL GOODCHILD'S MORAL STORY

PRIVATE BILBY. For the love o' paradise give us a rest, Father Peter, with your old campaignin' airs, an' yer old pensioner's cuffers. Fine campaigns, shootin' at a mob o' bare-shinned niggers.

Tim Doyle: 'Deed, then, "Slingers," avick, bud some iv them same niggers 'id be the full iv your eye.

Corpl. Goodchild. What's the sense of arguing with a ring-tailed recruit, Tim Doyle? Slingers thinks he could eat an Afghan or a dervish on toast; but if he ever meets a buck-jumping devil-skin of a Khyber hillman on his native dirt, that nigger 'll see the nails in Slingers' boots, or Slingers 'll learn some sword-play.

Tim Doyle. Thru for yous, corporal. I'd rather meet a fat sheep than a lane Pathan in a narrow passage, plaze God.

Bilby. Rats! An Englishman can always invent some kind o' plan for lickin' a nigger.

Corpl. G. Think so, Slingers? Then why don't you challenge Peter Jackson?

Bilby. Ow! that's up another street.

Corpl. G. And you'd be happier up another street than playing cut-and-come-again with a Sikh or a Goorkha. Ay, or a hillman either. Did you ever practise bayonet against sword.

Bilby. No.

Corpl. G. Then get at it. It'll be a sight more useful to you than a knowledge of waltzing in a frontier war. Every soldier should be taught bayonet-fencing. But he's not. If I'd not learnt it before I went out I'd never have come home again.

Bilby. Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. G. All right. I'll tell you the tale; it may put sense into you.

Ryan the Beauty. Orther for Corpl. Goodchilt's moral shtory.

Corpl. G. So it is a moral story, as you'll find, for there's two morals to it. One is to learn to use your bayonet before you learn to brag; and the other is not to scutter about things you don't understand.

It was a trifling thing set me on bayonet-fencing. We were at drill one day and one of the men fumbled in fixing his bayonet. The sergeant-major was on him like a kite on a rabbit. "Let that man have instruction drill," he bawls out, "until he can fix his bayonet in

three winks. Let him drill till he can *throw* it on in the dark, or when he's asleep. A soldier should fix his bayonet as easy as he sights his rifle. Remember, men, your lives may depend on your bayonets. The day may come when your life may depend on fixing smartly."

I thought about that, and I saw plainly that if my life was to depend on my bayonet it would pay me to learn to use the instrument. So I gave my mind to it. I treated a sergeant of the gymnastic staff, and he gave me lessons. I went in for dumb-bells to get muscle, and I worked away at bayonet against bayonet until I was that smart at it that no one in the corps could touch me. So that by the time I was sent out to India I was in form for anything. I practised out there too, and got to be very strong and nimble, and an A-oner at using the rifle and bayonet single-handed. My favourite trick was to point single-handed on the retreat. And after all I wasn't a little bit too clever, as you shall hear.

Boots !

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Corpl. G. No, Bilby, my lad, Afghans and hillmen aren't boarding-school lasses, and frontier fighting isn't an Easter Monday review. Wait till you come to march along mule-paths in a heavy kit, with the sun singeing your moustache, and the enemy rolling rocks on you ; or to wade

through a river of snow-broth five miles long, with half a thousand invisible devils shooting at you from ambush; or to drag a bucking, kicking, frightened mule-train over broken ground through a snow-storm, with bullets singing and whistling in among you from the back of nowhere, and the way to your camp a matter of guess-work. That's the sort of tack to make a man find himself. And then there's ague and dysentery, and foot-sores, and short commons, and a lodging in the cold ground—six men in one hole, hiding from the snipers.

As to the scrapping, it isn't the attack that's rawing; it's the retreating. Every man that's wounded takes three out of the fighting line; himself, and two to carry him. So you can guess that where a company has fifteen or twenty men hit the line's thinned out more than's pleasant.

They can shoot, too, those same niggers; and they are as artful as crows, and as wick as a mongoose. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. G. First time I went out I was in a white funk; that's the truth. Our right half-company had been foraging the day before and brought back five wounded. One of them was a pal of mine. He was shot through the bladder. It was pitiful to see him suffer. His face was

blue, and his eyebrows seemed to be crawling all over his forehead. He kept gnawing the sheet, and in one night had worried a yard of it to thrums. Then there was another fellow with his instep smashed. They had to keep giving him morphia; but they didn't save his foot. *He* chewed a bullet, and the tears were running down his face all the time. I did a weep myself. You couldn't have helped it. And a couple of hours later *I* was out for the first time. And it was a stiff job, too; to drive the enemy out of a narrow, twisted valley, and blow up two stone towers.

The valley was about four hundred yards wide, and we went in in skirmishing order; our line stretched from hill to hill. Directly we showed our noses the enemy opened fire, and one of the first shots killed Bill Melton, another of my pals. He was crossing a hummock just on my left, and he rolled nearly under my feet.

I don't know how old Tim relished his first taste of powder, but I felt fair shameful. My hand shook so that I could hardly load. My knees wobbled, and I thought about the chap in the Bible who says "my belly trembleth."

For the first minute I was all abroad, and hardly knew what I was up to. I kept wondering what it felt like to be shot through the bladder, and what I should do if a bullet smashed my

funny-bone, or scooped out half my jaw. Then, as I was running for cover, I saw a black chap bob up from behind a rock and fire at me. His shot went high; I heard it fizz. Then my right-hand man spun round on his heels and fell in a heap, and I heard him screaming out, "Oh! my God; oh! my God," and then the black (*my* black) bobbed up and fired at me again, and his shot seemed to bite my ear; and at the next advance, as I was making for cover, he fired a third time and shot away my left shoulder-strap. At that I got as mad as a winged panther, and I swore I'd settle him. So, when the line ran forward again, I stayed behind my cover, with my rifle in my shoulder and my eye in the notch. Up bobbed the Pathan, and couldn't see me; and while he was taking a quick look round I fired, and he came plunging, head first over his rock, like a diver. I had got him fair between the eyes.

Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. G. This business had taken my mind off wounds, and had set my blood tingling, so that the funk went out of me, and I fought and ran steadily, being in a kind of cold rage, vicious and wicked, and set to do my worst. Still, I did not give myself away, but took every scrap of cover I could find, and held it as long as I could; and though many a bullet came nearer to me than ever Bos

Bilby will get to heaven, I kept a whole skin, and we drove them out of the valley, and blew up the towers as comfortably as heart could wish.

When the towers went up kicking I thought the ball was all over. But *was* it? After we'd done the job we had to get back again, and fighting on the retreat's an acquired taste. You don't learn to love it at first sight—at least, I didn't. It's a creepy experience to turn your back on an enemy and run about twenty yards without knowing what's coming behind you. My spine felt prickly, and my marrow was like ice-cream, and my flesh all goose-lumps.

And then the road home was curly, and a fellow didn't always feel sure which crack in the rocks he ought to run through; and at last me and another private ran through the wrong one, and ran into a trap. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. G. We ran on a hundred yards without seeing friend or enemy. Then we wheeled left and came into a *cul-de-sac*—a blind alley with high rocks all round it, and no way out but the way in.

“Back!” says the other man—I forget his name—“back; we're in a cage.”

With that we turned, and there stood two Pathans at the corner, not twenty paces from us. One fired as we turned, and my pal dropped

dead. I fired then, and killed the man who'd shot him.

Then the other man, who was armed with a sword, made for me, and I found I had spent my last cartridge. The sweat started out all over me, but I whipped the bayonet on like lightning, and came to the charge, thinking of the sergeant-major's words, and thanking him in my heart. The big Pathan stopped about a yard from the point.

Bilby. And a good judge, too.

Corpl. G. You lay low, George, and give thanks that *you* were not behind the bayonet he was in front of. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Corpl. G. The chap I had to negotiate with for my passport out of that rocky mousetrap was no botch, I can assure you. There was a good two yards of him, all whipcord, whalebone, indiarubber, bull-hide, and brown varnish. He was bare-footed, half naked, as active as a wild cat, and as lean and stringy. He had a long, straight-bladed, two-edged broadsword in his right hand, and in his girdle a naked knife. He was not pretty, and he didn't look pleased. He had long, greasy black hair, a face like a walrus, and a smile like a cobra, and his white teeth and rolling yellow eyeballs were foul enough for a nightmare.

We stood looking at each other for a brace of

shakes, breathing short, and taking each other's measure. Then he said in English, "I have you now, infidel, unclean white pig."

"All right," said I, "you measly black-and-tan petty larcenist, come and collect me."

"Swine," said he, "you are taken in a snare. Now I will spill your life."

And I said: "Very good, Sweeny Todd; but move round to your right a wee, for if your shadow falls on me I'll catch the smallpox."

With that he grated his tusks, and says he: "Spawn of shame, I shall taste your blood," and he crept in half a foot.

We had both got our breath now, and were watching each other like two leopards on one branch.

"I will put you to the sword," said he, wetting his lips, and settling his fingers to the hilt, "and I will feed your eyes to the dogs, and nail your head by the ears to yonder tree."

I didn't look round for the tree; but I cheeked him back sharply. "You conger-faced, sneak-thieving, tarpaulin-coloured flea-trap," said I, "I don't care what happens to me when I'm dead so long as you don't lay your filthy paws on me while I'm alive."

At that he came to the guard, and I saw at once that he knew his trade. He held the sword at the guard with a supple-bent wrist, the

point about as high as his nipple, and stood side-long, with his left hand hovering ready for a grab at my rifle.

"Pray, dog," said he; "pray for a swift death, for now I slay thee."

"Come on, Beelzebub, Esquire," said I, "I'm thro' Sheffield. Come and fill your belly with cold steel."

He made a feint, and I stepped back a bit and rubbed my feet on the ground to make sure of my holding. Then we stopped crowing and got to business. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. G. It was a lovely fight, and would have been the making of an Islington tournament. I can use the bayonet, as you know, and he could use the sword as well. We were both cautious, and both determined. For, of course, murder was meat and drink to him, and I was in such a dirty temper that I would rather have had his life than a commission.

I certainly felt a bit nervous at first, and more anxious about my own skin than anything else, but when I got warm, and especially after I'd felt a prick or two of the sword, and the blood was wet in my sleeve, I'd no uneasiness on my own account. I was in a cold rage, and my only idea was to *kill* him, to *kill* him, to *kill* him blooming dead.

It was just the other way about with the Pathan. He set to work shrewd, but confident; he thought he had an easy thing on—as he would have had with some soldiers. But he soon saw that I knew the game, and when he felt that he'd met his match, his face changed and he looked serious. He wasn't scared—not a sign of it, but he was in a humour of deadly caution. He was fairly on his mettle, and I believe he thoroughly enjoyed himself. It was the one-handed play that surprised him. It made him nervous, and took a lot of the vice out of his attack.

I began the ball. I made a half-point, he parried, I disengaged and lunged at his right side, and he jumped round to his left and made a swift cut, which just missed my fingers. Then I jumped back, and he followed. I feinted, he feinted and cut, I parried, stepping in a foot, as I mostly do to a parry, and he drew away. After that we took up new ground and stood to it again.

He was a master swordsman, and game to the heels. His parries were clean and graceful, and his returns came like a flash. Twice he cut me on the left shoulder, and twice I pricked him in the right leg; but I bled most, and I should have felt uneasier than I did, only for an idea I had in my mind. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. G. This was my idea. The great trick

of a native swordsman is to snatch the bayonet off a rifle by tapping the locking-ring, and then turning the blade under the bend by a sleight of the wrist. I'd seen it done many a time in our lines by Sikh horsemen, and I guessed that this fellow would try it as soon as he felt familiar enough with my method to risk the attempt. And if he did try it I intended to make him pay for his whistle. So I fought cautious, and bided my time.

For a long ten minutes we fought without either scoring. After every bout we drew back to the guard, and I circled round to his right, in the hope of getting a rush out of reach of his grabbing left hand, and, of course, he turned with me. And while we were doing this I found myself thinking of all kinds of curious things. I thought about the Sheffield theatre and Margari-son's File Works, where I used to be under-book-keeper, and about the girl I was courting in Plymouth and what white hands she had, and how proud she was of her rings. And I noticed the Pathan's big knuckle-bones shining with the grip on the sword-hilt, and his other great paw clawing the air on the *qui vive* for a snatch. And I wondered what Emmie was doing just then, and what she'd think if she saw me playing at sudden death with that snarling boggart of the hills; and I wondered how the regiment was getting on in

its retreat, and what they'd have in the way of supper at night, and whether I should ever smell stew again. There was half a dozen great black crows in the valley, and they seemed to be watching and *waiting*. First they'd fly round in rings; then they'd settle down and look at us from the top of the cliff. And all the while I could feel the blood creep, creeping under my arm-pit, and all the while the Pathan and I glared into each other's eyes, and feinted and dodged, and pointed and parried, waiting each for the other to make a mistake.

The Pathan made the first mistake, *and* he made the last. The first was when I deceived him by leaping round to his left instead of his right, and feinted a point, and he tried a grab instead of a parry, and I circled his hand and pinked him sharply just above the left hip. The last was when he tried for the bayonet. That happened in this way. The dig in the side was a nasty one, and he was half mad with pain and rage, and fought greedy, longing for a chance. He wasn't pretty. His nose seemed to curl over like a hook. I could see the white all round the black disk of his eyeball. His top lip was sucked under, showing his wolfish teeth, and his toes were bent down like claws and seemed to grip the ground. The point of his ugly sword was pink with my blood, and there were red trickles along

the blade of my bayonet. As he moved about the muscles in his side kept contracting, and every time a small jet of black blood came from the wound. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Corpl. G. I knew the Pathan would try the disarm when I was off my guard, and I resolved to make him think I *was* off my guard. So I made believe to be very keen and eager, and pressed him home with point after point. Then, after three quick points, I pretended to step back, but only gave a few inches, and, as I hoped, he made his attempt at that instant, supposing I should not expect it while in the act of retiring. He was very deft and rapid, reaching over the bayonet and tapping the locking-ring sharply. But I was waiting for him, and as he turned his blade to strike the bend I disengaged, and as I disengaged I lunged with all my might, knowing it was neck or nothing, and the bayonet went in under his breast-bone right up to the socket with such force that he fell backwards, and I tumbled sprawling right over his head. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Corpl. G. I was up in a jiffy with my rifle in my hands, but the bayonet was left sticking through his body like a pin through a chafer. He was dead as Pharaoh—the bayonet must have gone clean through his heart—but I left him

alone, and walking over to my dead comrade I took his rifle, bayonet, and cartridges. I took his tobacco as well, for he wouldn't want it again, and I might.

When I'd got these things I pulled myself together and had a think. I knew I must be quite cut off from our retreating column, and that if I showed my nose in the valley I was no better than a missionary at a cannibals' feast, and perhaps I might be found where I was and shot on sight like a wild pig.

I decided to stay where I was till dark, and then make a run for it. I dragged the dead soldier and the two dead Pathans out of the open way into the farthest corner of the stone pit, and made a breastwork of them by piling them one on the other, of course putting poor Tommy Atkins on top. Then I spread the cartridges out on Tommy's back, and laid his rifle and mine across him, loaded, and pointing to the entrance of the trap; and then I said a short prayer, in case God might be looking, and I sat down and had a smoke.

Ryan. Ye did all a man could do, corporal.

Corpl. G. I did all I knew. I sat there for an armful of devilish slow hours, until it was near dark. Then I took t' poor dead Tommy Atkins, an' stood him upright in a niche in the cliff, with his helmet on, and his rifle by his side, and I

builded him in with stones. It was all I could do for him; but I couldn't help for thinking of the mother that bore him. What would she have felt when she was nursing him on her knee, if she could have seen him as he was to be, in his standing-up grave in that mousetrap. I think of him often myself; and wonder if he's there yet, like a sentry in his box—waitin' for the sound o' the last trump.

Anyhow, I tucked the poor lad up, took my own rifle and some cartridges, stuck the dead swordsman's knife into my belt, and crept out into the dark valley, leaving the two Pathans to the crows.

A few stars were shining, and there was no human creature astir, that I could see. But I could hear wild dogs or jackals barking and howling, and every now and again a pair of big eyes, like spots of flame, would glare at me out of the darkness, and give me a nasty jar. However, a panther would have been better to meet than a Pathan, and I was bound to get away in the darkness, or be knifed when the dawn came, so I stole along in the shadow of the hills, going very slow, until I reached the mouth of the valley, and then I took t' boggart and ran like a mad hare for camp. And do you believe me, I was in such a skurry and a funk that I ran right on when our outpost challenged me, and came as near being

shot dead by my own pals as ever I had been in the attack on the enemy's towers. But I got in safe, and I got some cold tea and dry biscuit, and went to sleep and dreamt about that black Pathan with the long sword and my dead chum in the mousetrap. I dreamt they had got me by the legs and were pulling me down into a grave, and I could hear poor Tommy Atkins saying, "Stick to him, Sweeny Todd; he's got my 'bacca," and I tried to call out, but all I could say was *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Bilby. Corporal, will you give me a bayonet lesson to-morrow?

Corpl. G. I will, man, surely, and I'll show you the way to the canteen.

THE CHANEY PIRUT

THE STORY OF PRIVATE WILLIAM RYAN (THE BEAUTY)

PETER STUMPIT. Ryan, you goat, spin us a cuffer, or I'll drop a lighted match in your ear.

The Beauty. It's the wheedlin' ways ye have, bhoys; who could resist yez? I'm wantin' the illoquent gift o' lyin' iv our friend Shtumpit, but I'll be relatin' to yez a simple tale I had from a cousin o' mine, one Dinnis Lynch, iv the Gun-snatchers. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Beauty. Me cousin Dinnis, in his youth, was clerk in a shippin' firm at Canton, an' the adventures I'm to be repatin' befell him on a voyage from that poort to Simoda, in Japan.

The Wee Mon. Was yer cousin struck dead for tellin' the truth, Weelyum?

The Beauty. Bite yer tongue, me Donegal changeling, for fear lest yez knock yer nose against annythin' harrd. Me cousin Dinnis wasn't

sthtruck dead for spakin' the trut', but his ind was no less remarkable, he breaken' a blood-vessel through tryin' to tell a lie.

The Wee Mon. Ye're in great danger the nicht, yersel'.

The Beauty. I was afther sayin', when I was intherrupted be the brayin' iv a Donegal donkey, that me cousin, havin' acquired some knowledge o' the hathinish babble hwich passes in China for a langwidge, was sint out on a schooner as a kind of a supercargo. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Beauty. 'Twas a long voyage, an' from first to last the divvle took an intherest in ut, by the same token that the capten was a North of Ireland man, so that no better might happen um. An' two days out in the Chaney Sea they was shtruck wid a toiphoon, hwich shpun the owld tub round and round like a juggler's dish, an' after rippen' the masts out iv her, and fillin' her full o' leaks till the fish was shwimmin' about 'tween decks, it wint off wid a yawp, as much as to say, "The back - o' - me - hand to yez," an' left the crew dhrownded, bald - headed, and broke up. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Beauty. An' immajately afther the hurricanoe took lave o' thim, out came the sun, an' fried um an' frizzled um, an' stewed um in their

own juice, till they was that dhry, that if a shpark had dhropt on the head of anny wan iv thim he'd have burrnt out to the butt iv his heels, like a poine shtick.

The Wee Mon. I'm a leer.

The Beauty. May the recordin' angel mark down the thruth to yez, an' may forked lightnin' tie knots round the neck iv the soldier that taught yez to talk, ye straddlin' little jackdaw.

Private Stumpit. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Beauty. To mind matthers, the divvle provided a dead calm, and the schooner, wid dim land on her poort bow, shtuck fast on the sea like a burrnt egg in the middle iv a hot plate, an' me cousin Dinnis an' the capten, and the nine coolies as made the crew, took reliefs at pumpun, an' swearun, an' whistlin' for a wind. An' so 't wint on for the worst part iv a week, an' at last wan evenin', as Dinnis stood on the poop lookin' out an' hopin' against hope, an' his eyes that dried wid the sun that they crayked whin he moved um, all at wanst he gives a buck-jump, an' lets a yell out of um: "A sail, a sail," an' wid that he fell to dancin' wid the joy.

Bud the capten wasn't so plased as Dinnis was. "Howld yer whist, ye omadhawn," he sez to me cousin, "don't be dancin' like a fool at a fair," sez he, "till yez knows phwat soort o' fortune that

sail may be bringing yez," and wid that he clapped his spoi-glass to his oi, and took a long, lastin' shtare at the sail, an' the coolies lets go the pumps an' listens wid their oies, ears, and mouths, till they see what he's for tellin' um.

Dinnis was surrprised wid this, but whin the Capten shpoke he was more surrpriseder than iver, and spite iv the hate iv the sun, the marrow iv his backbone wint as cowld as quicksilver. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Beauty. What was ut the capten said? He said, "Howly farmer! this finishes ut."

"Phwat *is* ut?" says Dinnis, in a wake voice, and his belly began to shiver like a bloo-monge. An' the skipper answers him in one worrd—"Piruts!" Whereupon the coolies gave a long, lingerin' yowl, like a dog objectun to music.

The coolies was poor, lame, shrivelled craythers, wid their skins tight over their ribs, suggestun baked rabbuts, an' 'tis loike they'd not be good plucked wans under ordinary cirrcumshtances; but they was open to reason, an' seein' they'd no choice bud 'twixt bein' kilt and bein' dhrownded, they determined to sell their poor shrunken carcasses at the price of English mate.

They were none too rich in arrums, havin' only a few owld smooth-bore muzzle-loadin' muskets, an' sorra the big gun in the ship; but they

shtrapped on their cutlashes, and cleared for action.

'Twas soon over. The junks—there was two iv thim—came up steady, makin' way wid long sweeps, an' wid their big square sails, though there was no wind, set full, like doormats hangin' out to dhry. They was smallish junks, but as full o' piruts as a wasp nest's full iv waspses, an' most likely had put off from some creek in the mainland beyant.

The crew o' the schooner waited until the leadin' junk was so near that they could hear the creak-crack iv the oars, an' the gugglin' iv the wather under her prow, an' then let fly their first poor volley; an' the junk made answer wid a charge o' scrap-iron, rusty nails, an' lead pipe chopped small, out iv a brass nine, hwich ploughed down the Belfast skipper an' two coolies, an' sent the compass-box flyin' in diminutive little morrsels a hundred paces out to sea.

Dinnis had a revolver, an' was just about sharin' the six bar'ls amongst the bunch o' blaggards collicted in the pirut's bows, whin he bethought himself iv a shtratagem, and bate a shstrategic retrate towarrds the cabun.

Down into the cabun he wint, closin' the doors behint him, and intindin' to make a barricade an' defend himsilf till the last. But whin he got in there the firrst thing that shtruck him in his oies

was a hijeous owld fright iv a Chaney idol stud up on a block in the cabun corner. It was a paper-mashy figger, full life-soize, wid a face loike a bad drame, all oies an' teeth an' grimaces, the look iv hwich wis evil enough to have scared a shark from his dinner.

As Dinnis enthered the cabun this outrageous owld nightmare seemed to grin at um wid an insultin' expression, hwich made Dinnis so woid that he up wid his fist an' give the haythen imposture a shtraight droive betwixt the oies iv him, an' no sooner did he do ut than he perrceived a chance of his loife.

The haythen god was holler inside. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Beauty. In less toime than it takes a polisman to lie he heaved up the feet iv the paper-mashy nightmare an' crawled into um. Then he made a small hole in one iv the god's oies, an' howldin' his six-shooter in his hand, stood waitin' for the marrch of evints.

The reflections iv me cousin Dinnis insoide iv the haythen god wis the best parrt iv the shtory, as he used to tell ut, bud as I'm of opinion that he made up ivery wan o' thim reflections some years after, in calmer momunts, I shall omit thim here. Whin a man's sowl is nearly out iv his body, an' him houlding it down wid both hands, he's not after making purrty speeches to himsilf.

An', besoides, Dinnis would be taken up wid listenin', an' all his brains would be in the ears iv him. At any rate, he heerd what wint on overhead on the deck. An' firrst iv all he heerd a shcramblin' an' a shufflin' o' feet an' a clash an' click o' steel; an' thin he heerd a silence; an' thin foive dishtinct an' separate squales, followed by foive dishtinct an' several splashes in the sea, an' he knew that foive coolie troats had been cut and foive cooley corpses heaved overboard as plain as if he'd been wan iv the coolies himsilf.

An' after that he heerd the piruts slamonadin' about the decks and pow-wowin' over the loot, an' immajately there was a dhrummin' iv wicked feet on the shteps iv the cabun, an' in come tumblin' a baker's dozen iv unsuccissful experiments in humanity, wid uglier faces than yez do be seein' on a Guy Fawkes' day, an' the most iv thim brandishin' overgrown pistols or hungry-looking knives in their yaller hands; an' they fell to rummagin' the cabun, an' afore you might ha' said a respectable prayer they'd claned out ivery drawer an' locker an' were off again. An' there stud poor Dinnis insoide iv the idol, loike a candle under an extinguisher, an' wid the sweat runnin' off him like taller guttherin', to make the risimblance complate. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Beauty. Well, to lave out onnecessary detail, I may tell yez in a few wurds what me cousin found out in a long time, an' that is that the piruts, afther plunderin' the schooner, had gone off to their den, lavin' her in charge iv six men an' a boss, wid orders to dhrop anchor and overhaul the cargo. An' so the poor ship was possist of seven divvles, an' Dennis, through his peep-hole saw a good dale iv thim, an' laid his plans accordin'.

They was, as I've said, a somewhat unpraypossession crew. The lot iv them had oies like buttonholes cut crooked, mouths loike frogs, an' complixions like over-ripe bananas. "God forgit me," thinks Dinnis, "if iver I see the loiks iv um. If I had that dhirty half-dozen of libellious caricatoors in Dublin I'd draw rint for thim. They'd be the makun iv a demon scene in a Gaiety panthomine," an' wid that he named them in his own moind, for reference; and the names he give thim was Judis Ascayriut, Punshus Poilut, Dhirty Dick, Dan'l Dancer, Ananias, an' Swaney Todd; but the boss he was afther callin' Satan. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Beauty. Dinnis soon percayved that the howl bilin' iv dhirty land-crabs had a shtrong wakeness for fire-wather, an' wid that he offered up a blessun for the sowl of the man that first invinted dhrunkenness, for iv thim piruts had been

Good Timplars the divvle the wan iv him had lived to tell the tale.

Grog had been sarved out to thim, ache wan bringin' a bottle iv it into the cabun, wheer they stowed it away in the hammucks they'd slung, an' afther that all tumbled up to juty.

Whin they wis gone Dinnis crawled out iv the god an' investigated the bottles. They wis all about half-full. He emptied the whole of Punshus Poilut's liquor into a tin cup, filled Swaney Todd's bottle to the muzzle, put the two bottles, impty an' full, back into their own hammucks, and wormed himsilf insoide iv the idol again, takin' the balance iv the whisky wid him.

In the evenin', whin the murtherin' lubbers came down to the cabun to tay, Punshus Poilut goes to his hammuck for a dhrink, an' foinds the bottle dhry. At that his oies turnd green wid the rrage, an,' says he, shpakin', iv coorse, in Chinese, "The curse iv Cromwell!" sez he; "some dhirty spalpeen's afther robbin' me iv my grog. Hurroo!" he sez, "turn out yer hammucks, ivery sinner's son iv yez, or I'll crack the pate iv anny thief as is able fer me."

Well, ivery yaller fright iv thim pulls out his bottle wid wan hand, an' draws his knife wid the other, and whin Punshus Poilut sees Swaney Todd's full bottle he makes no more wurrds iv it, but jumps fer um, an' in the toime it takes to turnd a pancake

Swaney has his weazen slit from ear to ear an' Punshus is breathin' his last through a hole in the side iv him big enough for a duck to lay eggs in.

Boots !

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

The Beauty. Iv coorse, Satan wis sint for, an' he came and shlapped the faces, an' pulled the noses, and kicked the sterrns, an' currsed the sowls of the four survivin' scare-crows; an' thin' Punshus an' Swaney was fed to the sharrks and the rest wint back to wurrk, takin' their bottles wid thim to make sure.

But Dinnis had other ijeas in his moind, an' whin the coast wis clear he come out from ould paper ribs, an' groped around for the carrds. He knew the piruts would have carrds, an' that they'd use thim,—Chaneymen bein' desprit gamblers from toe to finger, an' chates iv the sublimest magnificince. Wheerfore Dinnis found carrds in ache hammuck, an' as luck would have ut, three packs iv thim all wid plain yaller backs. Thim backs plased Dinnis as much as the sight iv a bride's face on the weddin' mornin', an' as quick as might be he slips an ace iv spades and an ace iv hearrts out iv Dan'l Dancer's pack into the pack belongin' to Judis Ascayriut, conceals all the cards bar Judis's, an' back he goes to his hidin' place. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

The Beauty. So at night, afore they'd been

playin' five minyoots, Dhirty Dick lays down the ace iv hearrts, and Judis Ascayriut jumps up wid a snarl, an' shows another ace iv hearrts in his own hand, and sez he, shpakin' Chinese, "Phwat's this, ye creepin', shufflin', daylight robber, phwat's this?"

Dick looked all taken aback, and sez he, "Tare an' 'ouns," he sez, "if I can undershtand ut," he sez. "'Tis a misthery."

Wid that up rose Ananias, bilin' wid indignation, an' calls out to Dick, in Chinese, "Shame sit in yer lap, an' grief share yer pillow, ye bowld-faced liar; ye shtocked thim, bad ind to yez, so ye did."

An' wid that the table wis overturned, an' there wis a melly iv legs an' arrums, an' knives an' pig-tails on the flure, an' the lamp fell from its chain, an' got mixed wid thim, an' Satan, hearin' the hullabaloo, lepped into the thick iv ut wid a marlin'-shpoike, an' the end iv ut was that Dhirty Dick an' Judis Ascayriut wint to supper wid the sharrks, Ananias was hoisted into his hammuck wid a broken skull, an' the capten, Satan, lay down an' smoked himsilf silly wid opium, lavin' Dan'l Dancer wheer he was, on watch. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Now was the time for Dinnis to be movin'. First he wriggled out from the god, an' stitched Misther Satan up safe an' snug in his hammuck. Then he got back insoide iv the god, cut a howle in

his paper-mashy stummick to shoot through if needful, an' waltzed up on deck wid a light hearrt and a heavy shtep. Down the deck wint Dinnis, the owld idol lookin' such an ondacent horror in the moonshine that whin Dan'l Dancer set oies on ut he give a squalle iv terror, thinkin' t'wis the owld wan come for his sowl; an' callin' out in Chinese, "Holy Moses, 'tis the divvle, 'tis the divvle himsilf," he lepped into the say and wis chawed into sharrk's-mate in the twinklin' iv a star.

Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Beauty. Me cousin Dinnis niver shtopped to ax lave or say farewell, bud climbed into a small boat as wis towin' asterrn, an' puttin' up a sail, for there wis a whisper iv a wind springin' up, he shoved off an' made to sea wid all the speed Heaven granted um, an' if he had not been picked up be a shteamer in the earrly mornnin' afore the piruts returrned to the hulk, I'd iv been asleep an hour since, an' bad cess to yez for keepin' a dacent soldier awake shpinnin' cuffers.

Andy, avick, lind us a shmoke iv yer poipe; me troat's as dhry as gineral orrders.

THE MAN-EATER

DRUMMER FIDLER'S STORY

RYAN THE BEAUTY. Drummer Fidler, do yer jooty; shpin us the cuffer o' the man-ayter, wid the usual embellishments, an' I'll not let on but phwat I believe it ivery wurrd.

Fidler. If you can believe yourself good-lookin', you child-frightenin' Irish freak, you may believe Ananias or the Wee Mon.

The Wee Mon. Give attention to the story of Truthful James, the drummer.

Stumpit. Order, you Belfast limmer. Way for the Dirty Half-Hundred. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Fidler. It happened when we was in camp near Darjeeling, on the borders o' Bengal, me bein' at the time a drummer boy in the good old Half-Hundred—a corps as never met the enemy without lickin' him out of his—*Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Fidler. I was passin' the sergeants' mess-tent, when news came in that a man-eatin' Bengaler as

was then scoutin' in that districk, had surrounded his third native postboy.

You may not know, you that's never soldiered in the country, that the letters is carried by a running postboy, as bears a bell on a long bamboo staff. The bell's to attract the notice o' them as has letters. An' it were useful to the tiger, as wanted postmen.

They're knowin' creators, is tigers, an' the tactics o' this perticler joker were to make an ambushade of hisself on the road till the bell came past, and then, whallop—the postboy was for the dead-letter office. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Fidler. Well, when the news came o' the third outrage on the communications there was three sergeants in the mess-tent, having a liquor and a hand at nap. An' I closed up agen the canvas to hear the news.

"Why, damn my straps an' whiskers," says old Scrooby, the armourer-sergeant, "this joke's gettin' too funny. Is the whole intelligence department to be upset and disorganised by a blasted Bengalee gridiron?"

"He'll have the officers on his track to-morrow," says Colour-sergeant Geddings.

"My yees, that is true," says the old French bandmaster, Mr. Poiree.

"And so's this true," says Scrooby, "that

he'll have the non-commissioned officers on his track to-night. If he doesn't, call me Mary."

"D'ye mean it?" says the Flag.

"I do," says Scrooby; "I'm for the jungle to-night," says he, "and I'm for taking that Bengal jumper's stripes off him."

"Ah yees, he will be reduced," says the band-master.

"Put my name down," says the Flag, who were a man of few words. And so it were agreed among 'em, they being then pretty well in liquor, and the time near on tattoo, as they should set out on the track about two in the mornin', the nights then bein' moonlight, and should wait for Stripes by a mango-tree about four miles out of camp. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Fidler. You must know the tiger was alleged to have his doss near by this tree, and the hidea were as he'd be out on the kill all night, and would come home to roost, feeling full an' sleepy, about dawnshine, when the hunt would be up and the music would begin.

Well, it would have done you more good than a sermon to see the procession start. There was the three jovial 'untsmen carryin' their rifles, a supply o' ball cartridge, an' haversacks containing decks o' cards, bread an' onions, a rabbit pie,

a bottle o' mess brandy, an' two bottles o' Billy Stink (native rum) by way of reserves.

Geddings, the Flag, were big an' tall, a fine man, as marched always as if 'e was steppin' to the band. Scrooby were short and stout, an' walked wide like a duck; an' Poiree, the bandmaster—we called him Bogey, he were so ugly and comic—were about the height of his rifle, an' not much fatter than his cleanin' rod.

Scrooby were a dead shot, the Flag middlin', an' the bandmaster couldn't have hit a hollow square if he'd fired from the centre of it. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Fidler. They was different men in all ways but one—they all had pluck, an' plenty of it, an' I b'lieve as old Bogey would have took Stripes by the tail as familiar as Bill Ryan would take a quart jug by the ear.

Ryan. Chance is a swate thing, me jool.

Fidler. Scrooby were always full o' beer, Poiree were always full o' talk, an' the Flag were always burstin' with silence.

If you saw Poiree walkin' alone he seemed to be always a listenin', with his head a bit at the port, and his eyes wrinkled. If you saw Scrooby he was continual a-smackin' of his lips or a-pattin' of his fat paunch, like a man might after a long pull at a beer jug; and as for Colour-

sergeant Geddings, he would keep glancin' down at his feet—he had feet like a pi'neer's shovel—an' every time he seen 'em he'd shake his head an' say right quiet to hisself, "Dear, dear, dear. O Lord!" an' then he'd chuck a chest and curl 'is long carrotty moustaches and proceed.

I'll imitate him, an' proceed with my story; but first an' foremost I must tell you the spin of a man old Bogey were. Bogey was ugly, an' black and wrinkled, an' his moustache were like half a yard o' charred furze bush. He were a good sort, but as short as a pith wand an' as full o' pepper as a cayenne pod. To hear him chaw the rag to the band at practice were a joy an' a surprise. He used to stand on a empty wine box, through bein' so small, an' he used to dance like a monkey on a horgan an' wave his stick like a cavalryman doin' pursuing practice.

He'd a heye like an 'awk: see'd everything, an' give it a name when 'e see'd it. "You man Thomas Thomas," he says one day to a bandsman as played a base thing like a big meer-schaum pipe, "you Thomas," he says, "you not play, you idle pig, you play nothings. Will you not blow, sarrre?" "I am blowin', sir," says Thomas. "Aha! to hear him," shouts old Bogey, "to hear that lie-teller, Thomas; aha! but I spot you, sarrre. You do not play upon

your instrument, an' you do not play upon me, I have seen you with my eye, sarrre. You make belief; but you make not sound. You puff out your cheeks; but you do not pom-pom."

Another time the clarinets was doin' a shirk, and Bogey couldn't get 'em right, an' he threw his cap on the ground an' tore his hair, an', says he, "May a beneficent Providence *rrrain* me down clarinet players, for I have none."

An' another time, when the tune wouldn't come right, he lifted up his hands in prayer, an', says he, "Ah, Heaven, avert your eyes from me; for I haf a band of fools." And yet I've heard it said as he were a good nap player. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Fidler. I was a nice boy then, a very nice boy, and took a lot of interest in things, and I wanted to see the great hunt for the gridiron; but of course when I asked the Flag to let me carry the lunch and ammunition he executed a flank movement with his foot and attacked me in the rear. I strategicated and fell back on my supports.

There was three pals o' mine in the drums, called Norey, Shakeshaft, and Whistler. They was like most young drummers: fit for anything but heaven, and ready to do anything but what

was right. Of course I was different; but then there's not many like me.

The Wee Mon. Amen. 'Tis a wonder the saints have no snatched ye up lang sin' to lie in Abraham's bosom.

Fidler. So we four made up our plans. The tiger were supposed to have his lodgings on the cold ground somewhere near by a big mango-tree, and the firing party for his funeral was bound to camp out thereabouts. Stripes would be out looking for invitations to dinner all night, an' early next mornin' he'd come home to bed. The tree was a good hour's walk from camp. We decided to go out about five o'clock, meet the procession comin' home, and play 'em into camp with drum and bugle. So we got the guard bugler to give us an early call, an' at five o'clock we fell in an' started for the pic-nic. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Fidler. Well, we stepped along cheerily, an' at six o'clock we reached a little hill to the left of the nulla where the mango was, an' crept up very cautiously, and with something like a judgment-day funk in our stomachs, for it had been remarked by Whistler, comin' along, as if the tiger didn't keep the appointment the sergeants would be so crusty that it was a Jew's eye to a cowrie-shell agen our trousers lasting till next issue day.

Well, we crept to the top o' the hill and peeped over into the nulla, an' there we see a sight as gave our hearts the right-about-turn an' set our knee-caps clattering like castanets.

There was the three jovial 'untsmen, fast asleep an' snorin' under the tree, an' there, not thirty paces from 'em, was Mr. Stripes, the man-eater, wavin' his wicked tail, an' twitterin' his wicked lips, an' looking as hungry as a raw recruit an' as full o' sin as an old dacoit.

He'd had no luck, an' no supper, an' here was three silly soldiers spread out fast asleep on his breakfast table. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Fidler. First thing to be done was to wake the sleepin' beauties : way to do it was to make a row. "Steady, men," I says, and round I slings my drum. "'Tention," I says, and the other boys handles their bugles, an' the tiger moves in a pace, an' licks his lips, an' rolls his eyes. "Blow, boys, blow," I says, and I looks an' sees Norey as white as his belts, and Shakeshaft with tears in his eyes, and the tiger takes another pace forward, an' I ups with my sticks and I calls out "Blow, blast you, blow," an' they let a blare out of 'em, and I rapped into the five-bar roll.

You talk about a shindy ! It was like a chorus o' mad elephants soundin' the charge. An' you

talk about wakin' up them sleepers! It would have woke the dead as was killed at the siege o' Jericho.

The rampageous noise scared the gridiron proper. He gives a buck-jump and an 'orrible 'owl, and turns tail for the jungle at the double. Same instant up jumps the sergeants. Sergeant Geddings, he's half awake an' half tight, and begins to slow waltz round an' round, thinking it's guard-turn-out, and a-shouting: "Where the 'ell's my 'elmet? Where's my gun?"

Scrooby starts up wide-oh, and, takin' in the situation with one squint, slings his rifle round his neck and shins up the tree, thinkin' to get a shot at Stripes by overlookin' the long grass; and Poiree, he jumps like a pea in a pan, whips up the Flag's rifle, fires afore he opens his eyes, sending his shot as near the tiger as it went to anything else; and then starts dancing and poulevarin' and talkin' the country bat and broken English all at once. "Aha!" he says, "I haf destroy him. *Parly voo Franky*. He is afraid. *Juldy, Juldy*. Another gun, *mon ami*. He will escape. *Mon Dieu*. He will escape. How then? It ees not that I haf missed him. *Sacre, non!* God is good. It ees impossibility!" And he snatches up another rifle and rushes after Stripes, who by this time is well away in the jungle, running like old—*Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Fidler. Well, Poiree hadn't got half-way across the clearing between the tree and the tall grass, when we hears a crack an' a roar, and directly after back comes the man-eater full tear, and making straight for Poiree.

Poiree stands like a rock, and fires somewhere into the left top corner of the Presidency, and it had been all over with him only for the armourer-sergeant, who'd got up the tree and was ready. Bang goes the armourer's Martini, and up goes the tiger like a shuttlecock off a battledore, and comes down whallop, a-rollin' an' clawin', and spreads out dead at Poiree's feet.

"Ah, my friends," says Poiree, "did I not say? That I did not kill: it was an accident. But that I haf missed him? Nevarre!" and he points to a wound behind the tiger's right fore paw.

"Why, yes," says the Flag, walking up quite cool, "that's what happened. The shot we heard just now was the echo of the shot you fired half a minute before."

But just then the long grass opens and shows a brown face, and someone says: "Hallo! there's my pussy," and out comes a soldier of ours, a chap called Rosier, a dead shot, an old jungler, and as keen a poacher as ever carried a bag. It seems *he* had been out on the track of the man-eater, and

when Stripes bolted from the music he took a flying shot at him from his cover, and sent him ravening and roaring back again.

So, you see, it was Rosier as really settled the tiger's hash, but it was *me* an' the other boys as saved the sergeants' lives. And what do you think was the thanks we got for our service?

CHORUS. *Boots!*

Fidler. Nearly as bad as that.

The Bandmaster says: "You haf spoiled my sport, and you haf frightened the tigare with your accursed discord of music that should make a pig to disgust himself of it. And you shall be reported to the guard for breaking bounds."

And Scrooby says: "Catch hold of the rifles and ammunition, you monkeys, and double back to camp for bearers. We'll march in the corpse in state."

As for the Flag, he said nothing, as usual; but he wheeled me afore the captain, and I got three days' clubs.

An' the next mornin' as I was going up the lines to sound the "Come-for-the-love-o'-God," I met the bandmaster, and I couldn't help smiling, and he saw me, and takes me by the ear, and says he, "You little devil drummer boy, see, see. If you say one whisper of that which you haf think you see at the hunting of the tigare, I will peel

you like an orange." And he gave my ear a twist and let me go.

Ryan. An' phwat became o' the skin?

Fidler. It was drawn lots for, an' Scrooby won it, an' gave it to the canteen sergeant's daughter for a hearthrug, an' a bad job it turned out for him, as you'll see when I tell you about pretty Sophy, the shrew, an' the breaking of the rings.

and never a woman yet. Not one, my lad, and that's the trouble." And he stares harder than ever, and whispers to himself, "That's the trouble, boy,—the trouble, trouble, trouble."

I felt creepy when I heard him, and I went and had a drink and told Corporal Batts, my chum, and Batts said, "Finnerty's looking for something or for somebody which he'll never see."

"And why," says I, "will he never see them?"

"Because," says Batts, "when the person comes that Finnerty's waiting for, Finnerty will be dead."

"Why," says I, "you are as daft as he is, and I'll never think any more about your rubbish;" but I did think about it, and so much that I began to wonder whether I was going off it myself. For I got to asking myself the question to a kind of tune, "Who is he waiting for?—Who is he waiting for?" and I had a hard job to break the silly habit off. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. A. When Finnerty was in charge of the guard he was for everlasting writing letters. He'd write a dozen of them in a night, and beautiful letters all of them; and he'd burn them as he finished them, and sit looking into the fire after, just in the same way and with the same face as when he looked out of window. And the curiousest

thing about the letters was that they was all to nobody. Always he began in the same way, with a "dear," and then a blank, and he'd sit and chew his pen and think, and then he'd sigh, and go on writing. One night I sat close by him, and says I, "Sergeant, can't you remember the name?" And he never seemed offended by my blooming cheek; but he just said, in a quiet, seriousish way, "I haven't forgot exactly; it isn't that quite. But I don't know who to send it to."

"Well, that's a rum start," says I.

"Yes," he says; "it is so very puzzling, and besides, it is tiresome to have to keep writing over and over again, and never have anyone to send the letters to."

"I wouldn't write," says I.

"Ah!" he says. "*You* wouldn't write. Why should you? There's no *reason* for you to write. You'd be a fool if you *did*, you know; now, wouldn't you?"

So I gave it up as a bad job, and let him do his own lunny way.

Pte. Stumpit. It was the spear-cut that affected his brain.

Corpl. A. Maybe, maybe, but that didn't account for everything.

Father Peter. Phwat didn't it account for?

Corpl. A. For the end.

Ryan the Beauty. Bad cess to ye, corporal, ye

haven't towld us the beginning. How and for what did he get the lick iv the spear?"

The Wee Mon. Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. A. There was an officer in the Borderers was generally disliked on account of being a buff-stick and a fool rogue generally, with never a kind look nor a good word for sergeant or soldier, but always an icy stare and a cold-drawn sneer and a "three-days' C.B.," or a "p'rade again in marching order," for every bit of a fault, so that he was the best hated man in the *pultan*, and went about with enough curses on his head to sink a fleet. For it is not the strictness that raws a man, nor does a few days' pack turn the stomach of a soldier, but when discipline is laid on vicious like the cut of a whip, and a wiggling or a sentence is given with contempt, a man's blood curdles sour and his mouth spits bad black wickedness. This officer, Lieutenant Ripley, always spoke to the men as if they were niggers, and always looked at them as if they were dirt, and with the corporals and sergeants he was worse. He was a clever fellow, too, a crack rifle shot, a crack swordsman, a fine cricketer, and smart as mustard on all points of drill and duty, and these facts made his scorn bite all the deeper.

Well, Finnerty was his pet aversion, and

Finnerty was a sergeant in his company, so I leave you to guess how fond of him Finnerty was. Finnerty was checked, Finnerty was wheeled, Finnerty was reported, Finnerty was pegged. Finnerty was snubbed, hunted, bullied, and sneered at until he went to the colonel and offered to give up his stripes. The colonel refused to take the stripes; but next day Finnerty was put on the peg again by Lieutenant Ripley for "screening crime," and this time he was tried by court-martial and reduced. And the first day he went on p'rade as a private Mr. Ripley made a prisoner of him for inattention in the ranks, and the colonel told poor Finny that he was a stubborn man and would have to be broken in. That was, of course, in the field a few days before Ulundi, and meant, "Beware of the cat."

Now, Finny was a jolly good sergeant, and a scholar, as I told you, and the disgrace cut him to the quick, and some of the men was of opinion that the next time the Borderers were under fire either Finnerty or Lieutenant Ripley would lose the number of his mess, but the general idea was that Finn would get himself settled. What really happened was—*Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. A. What really happened was that poor Finny took his rifle and stole out of camp one day at dawn, with the intention of blowing his

brains out. Not wishing to be interrupted in the ceremony, he went a good half-mile beyond the outposts, and was walking steadily down into a hollow, which he had chosen as being private and comfortable, when he sees a sight that drove all the foolishness clean out of his head in a jiffy and put him on his mettle as a soldier. It seems that Lieutenant Ripley, riding from camp to camp on some duty, had ridden into this hollow and got caught in ambuscade by a Zulu pic-nic party. His horse had been speared before he knew where he was, and the lieutenant, pitched out of the saddle, had been left in the middle of a ring of a dozen big black bullocking braves, with only his sword to defend himself with. He was a good plucked one, and had killed three, and was just getting shut in among the assegais and hide shields when Finn comes on the scene. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corpl. A. Finn drops one black with the bullet he'd meant for himself, and then slips his bayonet on and joins the merry party. Being clever with his tools, and in a proper frame of mind for the kind of a job before him, Finn reduced the population like an epidemic, and, what with his savage energy and Mr. Ripley's cool skill, in less than a couple of minutes the eight blacks were all killed, wounded, or missing, and the officer and the private were left blooming alone

They stood and looked at each other for a little while they got their breath, and then the lieutenant says, "Finnerty," says he, "you've got a wipe across the head." Finn puts up his hand and finds his hair all bloody. Then he says to the officer, "I beg your pardon, sir, but I think you've lost a finger."

"Yes," said the officer, "and a diamond ring with it. I shall be glad if you'll be good enough to tie me up after I've attended to your scalp."

So the two men doctored each other, the officer talking very polite, and the private answering "yes" and "no," and keeping his place, like a suet-headed policeman before a magistrate, and then walked off, stiff and solemn, to camp, the officer in front and the private behind, till they came to Mr. Ripley's tent. Then, "Come in," says the officer, "and have a drink," and "No, thank you, sir," says the private, "if you don't mind," and "Private Finnerty, follow me," says the officer, and poor old Finny steps inside, and Mr. Ripley pours out two glasses of brandy, and *orders* the private to drink. "Now," says he, "Private Finnerty, touch glasses, and drink on the word Go. Here's to the soldier that *is* a soldier, whether he wears a steel scabbard or trails a rifle. Go!"

Finny drank the toast, saluted, and was moving off when the officer put his hands on his shoulders

and turned him round. "Finnerty," says he, speaking as soft as a woman, "you're a damned good soldier, and have proved it, and I'm a damned ass, and have proved it. I won't ask you to forgive me, but I'll ask you to give me your hand. I'm a fool, but I tried to do my duty. You have done yours so well that you can give me credit. Now."

"Sir," says Finn, "you use a sword well, and I can use a bayonet, and there's a dozen dead Zulus of our making, God forgive us, and that's all there is to it, and no more to be said. Have you any other orders, sir?"

Then Mr. Ripley laughed, and says he, "Yes, I order you to join me in another drink," and, says he, "There is one other word to say. You saved my life to-day," says he, "and behaved manful. Thank you very much," and he took hold of Finny's hand and patted him on the shoulder, and Finny came away with tears in his eyes and went to find the doctor.

That's how Finn got his stripes back, and that's how he came to be dotty and imagine vain things.
Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Pte. Shovels. Well, corporal, since you began in the middle, and went back to the beginning, perhaps you'll tell us the end.

Corpl. A. I will, man, surely The end was

very creepy. Old Finn was in charge of the guard at Devonport Raglan Barracks, and had been writing letters and burning them, just as usual, and all had gone comfortable and correct until about half-past three in the morning of New Year's Eve.

I was corporal of the guard, Pocky Purkiss was on No. 1 post. It was a frosty night and dead quiet. Purkiss said he never felt such silence. There wasn't a breath stirring. It was so still you might have heard a snowflake fall. Purky stood at his box and listened to the silence. He said he felt a kind of nervous, as if somebody was behind him, but there was nothing there.

The sergeant, as usual, was at the table writing letters to nobody. Several times he stopped, as if he was listening. Then he'd go on again quite quiet and busy.

At about three o'clock, however, he looks up sharp and says to Purky, who was right opposite the open door, "Did you speak, sentry?" "No, sergeant," said Purky. Then Finnerty wrote a few lines more, and was going on when, as he lifted his pen for a fresh dip, he stopped with his pen raised up, and listened with a look of surprise. "What's that?" he asked sharply. "Didn't hear nothing, sergeant," said Purky. "Hark!" says Finnerty,— "that step; who's coming toward the gate?" Purky looked at the

sergeant and shook his head. There wasn't a sound in the air. The sergeant laid the pen on the table and rose up. He had a queer look in his eyes, as if he was expecting somebody as he'd be very pleased to see. He stepped out into the verandah, and as he did so he gave a violent start, and said, "Now, then, you hear that!"

"No, sergeant," says Purky, feeling very much surprised; "I hear nothing."

"Why, man," said Finnerty, turning on him sudden and sharp, "are you deaf? Don't you hear that knocking at the gate?"

Purky heard nothing, and stood still at the shoulder, staring like a stuffed dog.

"Why don't you challenge, man?" says the sergeant. "Challenge! challenge!"

Then Nosey Purkiss sees the joke of the thing, or thinks he sees it, and slaps his rifle to the port and roars out, "*Haltoocomestherre?*" and the sergeant takes a couple of paces towards the gate, and a woman's voice answers as clear as a bell from outside the wicket, "Friend!" I heard it myself quite distinct.

And Nosey answers, "Pass, friend; all's well," and at the word the sergeant falls flat on his face without a word, and when they pick him up he's stony dead, and the woman—or whatever it was—has left the gate, and is nowhere to be seen, and never to be heard of, and that's the fact; and

if you want an explanation of why it was or what it was, you can find one for yourselves, for I'm as mum as poor old Daft Finnerty himself, and he's been buried three years. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

BLACK-EYED SUSAN

*AS RELATED BY PRIVATE TOMMY TURPIN,
ALIAS SHOVELS*

SHOVELS. Seeing as Bill Ryan, Peter Stumpit, and the other first-class shots o' this room are markin' time, I think I'll have a pull at the long bow myself.

CHORUS. *Boots!*

Shovels. The story relates to a clump-headed soldier of ours called Ginger Smith, and a native girl as we called Black-eyed Susan; her country name, seldom bein' used, 'as slipped my memory.

Susan was a camp-follower. She were straight an' shapely an' handsome, as many native girls are, an' she were more pleasanter than respectable—by a good-sized dollop.

Ginger were a well-set-up, clean, and smart soldier, and a heap more cheerful an' chatty than sensible. He were a born fighter, and had a head as hard and as solid as a round shot, an' with no more brains to it.

He were a Nottingham chap, a heavenly boxer,

an' had only two ideas in his kit: one being as sin was black and blackness was sin, and the other being as no Irishman could get science.

This last idea couldn't be punched out of him, or it would have been, for it brought him as many mills in a week as would last a champion fistic boomster for a lifetime.

Whether the first idea stayed by him or not I'm not able to say, seeing that he was such a wooden-headed, obstinate mule, an' that his talk was as full o' darkness as a country horse-dealer's is full o' lies. But if he didn't learn to uncouple the ideas of sin and Susan, he was the only man in the *pultan* as didn't. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Shovels. Just to give you a notion of the hard-bitten, donkeyfied obstinacy an' foolishness of Ginger (he were called Ginger from his head of hair, which were like a bonfire), I'll tell you something of his peculiar way of arguin' the p'int.

One night we was talkin' over the Afghan row, we bein' then on the line o' march towards the hills, when all at once Ginger chips into the argument, an' says he, "You fellers may chaw the rag till your teeth comes loose, but you'll never dis-inter me of the hidea as all this confuscation is stirred up by the Prooshians."

"Why, you red-headed goat," says Bill Irons,

"the Prooshians has no more concern with this bobbery than the Bosjesmen of Africa."

"All right," says Ginger; "I suppose the Prooshians is very nice men, an' I hope you'll find 'em such."

"But," says Bill, "there ain't no Prooshians now, Ginger; they're all Germans."

"There's Prooshians in this job," says Ginger, with a knowin' smile, "and that you'll find. There ain't nothin' more artful and connivin' than a Prooshian, nowhere," says he.

"Is't Rooshians you mean?" asks Bill.

"My lad," says Ginger, "Rooshians is Rooshians, an' Prooshians is Prooshians, as will come home to you in due course."

"Well," says Bill, "the Prooshians has no quarrel with England."

"Jess so," says Ginger.

"And," says Bill, "they are too far off from Injia to have a chance of a grab at it."

"Jess so," says Ginger.

"Well, Ginger," says Bill, "there's no sense in supposin' as the Prooshians 'as any influence with the Ameer, or cares a rap about him or us, an' no one only a lunatic or a Nottingham goat," says he, "believes as the Prooshians is going to play into the hands o' France by picking a quarrel with us."

"Jess so, jess so," says Ginger.

"Very good," says Bill Irons; "there ain't no proof of it, an' there ain't no sense to it, an' where do you find a reason for what you says?"

"In the Prooshians," says Ginger, with his knowin' smile, and he goes on quite solemn, "as I were sayin', and deny it if you can."

"Ginger," says Bill, "can you give me a *reason*?"

"Plenty," says Ginger,—“the Prooshians ’as stirred this trouble up, an’ the Prooshians means to work it for their own ends. They are in it, Bill Irons, and that I stand to. The Prooshians is in it, and under it, and over it, and all round it, as you will live and learn. The way as them Prooshians has gone about it, an’ the way as they’ve thrown dust in our eyes, an’ the way as they’ve put the hook into the Ameer’s gills is clever, dam clever, extraordinary dam clever, as you’ll disseminate to your sorrer, mark my words.”

Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Shovels. Just as Ginger was with the Prooshians he was with his idea about Irishmen’s want o’ science.

I mind once he was having a mill with Shawn O’Reilly, the big drummer o’ the In’iskillin’s, and Shawn feinted and drew Ginger’s left, stopped it with his right, like a picter, and shot out his left on Ginger’s nose. Ginger was knocked clean off

his legs, and fell flat about three yards off. But he jumped up grinning, and says to his second, "That's wheer it is with them Irish. They've no idea o' being scienced. If O'Reilly had judged his distance as a scienced man should do, that tip on the boko would have knocked me silly. Now, you just see me floor him in the next round, and tell me if he don't go down *crisp*."

And so he did, that's the fact.

Father Peter. A man needs weight as well as science.

Ryan. 'Tis a gift.

Shovels. There was a big fellow in our company called Granger, a surly pig of a man who never had a civil word for anyone; and one evening as we was standing about round the cook's fire waiting for the tea, this Granger came to light his pipe.

At the same minute up comes Black-eyed Susan and asks for a drink of water. "Get out, you black thing," says Granger, and he pushes her away, and taking her chattie out of her hand throws it in the dirt.

Well, Susan gives him a timid, tearful sort of look of her soft black eyes, and says she, "O Granger sahib, that not good."

Thereupon Granger, who was smoking, squirted the tobacco juice out of his mouth right into Susan's bare breast, and says he, "Go, you sow, go."

The poor girl was in a pitiful taking, and fell down on her knees sobbing and tearing her long black hair, and Ginger Smith, who was standing close to her, says to Granger, "That may be the way to treat a nigger, mate, but not a woman."

"When I want your opinion," says Granger, "I'll ax for it."

"Oh," says Ginger, smilin', and his blue eyes opening wider, as was usual when he were angry—"Oh," says he, "I was only thinking, if you'd do that way with a woman, I'd like to know what way you'd do with a man."

Well, Granger was a big, bullocky fellow, and could use his hands, and he and Ginger stripped and fought. I stood second to Ginger, and Susan came and stood by me all through the mill, until at last, after an hour o' the bitterest work I've seen, Ginger's gift told, and Granger were knocked blind and floppy, and had to be carried off the ground. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Shovels. What followed wants telling quick. Some o' you chaps 'as been there, an' knows the pleasures and sports of night camping in the Pathan country.

There was the usual sniping, with now and again a try at a tenting raid, none o' which came off with us, however, and there was the thing of all others that raws a regiment and makes the

men chew their teeth, and that was the knifing of the outpost sentries in the dark.

Half a dozen times in a week's march one of our outpost sentries had been murdered, *and* mutilated—you know; and at last every sentry was a lurkin' devil, with eyes like a cat, ears like a horse, and an obligin' readiness to fire first and challenge after.

You know the way o' the knifin'. A Pathan, naked and with his naked flesh well oiled, armed only with the long, murdering Afghan knife, comes crawling like a snake along the ground in the darkness, gets close to a sentry, rises up behind his back like a shadder, drives the blade to haft between his shoulders, and then—

Ryan. We know. Curse thim. We know.

Shovels. I don't know how the other men did, but when I was on outpost sentry that time I used to stand at the engage, with my finger on the trigger, and keep turning round and round. It's a trial, I tell you. There's nothing blows such a cold draught through a soldier's heart as that watchin' an' waitin' on a dark night for the sneakin' death as crawls in the jungle. It sets your supper crosswise to think of some blood-thirsty hell-dog rubbin' his belly on the ground behind you an' suckin' the knife-blade as he means to slash your spine with.

After the first half-hour a chap is all in a cold

sweat, and can feel his backbone sagging and his spine turning to ice water. If the night's quite silent he nearly faints with the loneliness. If he hears the leastest sound he fancies a greasy cut-throat is wriggling in his tracks. If he sees the eyes of a cat he takes 'em for the eyes of a Pathan. If he hears a jackal bark, or the noise of a snake in the leaves, he thinks it's a Pathan putting on airs of superiority, and has all his work cut out to keep from firing; and when the sound comes to him of the next Christian sentry passing the word, he thanks God, an' wets his lips, and sheers round in a wider ring, hoping he *may* spot the creeping knifer and have done with it.

Talk about rates o' pay, an' free kits, an' medals for distinguished service, there ain't enough rupees in the Head Pay Office to make it worth a man's while to put in a night's sentry-go under such like circumstances, and I'd have given up the Victoria Cross, a captain's commission, my best girl, and ten years of the sweetest part o' kingdom come, any night o' that outpost duty, for the pleasure o' driving my bayonet home to the socket through one o' them Sweeny Todds o' the jungle.

Stumpit. I've been there, me lad, and I know. A man feels to have seven backs, all cold, and a black butcher creepin' up behind every one of 'em.

Shovels. Three or four nights after his fight

with Granger, and with his features still in a bad state of repair, Ginger Smith was on outpost duty in an extra lonesome spot near the mouth of a small valley, and an extra dangerous spot too, because there was a running stream close by, and the bubbling and whispering of the water made it unusually hard to hear any sound of a creature crawling—not as a greasy Pathan makes much noise.

Well, Ginger had no more imagination than a bull, and I don't think he felt as unhappy as a man of sense might. And his way o' doin' sentry-go in the jungle was to carry his rifle at the support, and walk sharply along in a kind of long double loop, like a figure of eight, covering some fifty yards.

He'd been at this game about an hour, on a moonless and hot night, and was just crossing his own track, at the middle of the eight, when close at his heel he heard a bump and a groan, and then a sound like a panther leaping away out of danger.

Round spun Ginger, sharp as a fencer's wrist, an' fires at the sound. Somethin' dropped with a chokin' sob, and Ginger reloaded and turned round three times to catch whom he may. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Shovels. Then the patrol came running up, the corporal carrying a lantern, and there on the

ground they finds a woman, dead, with her left arm doubled under her and in her right hand a knife.

They turned her over and lifted her up, an' the corporal pushes the hair back off her forehead and brings the light to her face, and who should it be but Black-eyed Susan.

Susan it were. She'd been shot right through the poor black heart of her, never knowin', most like, where the quick death came from.

"Why, God save us," says the corporal, "this is a queer kind of Pathan you've brought down," and he looks at Ginger.

"Why, jigger me," says Ginger, looking down at the dead girl, "if it isn't Susan. She meant to knife me," he says. "I see it all. She got the needle because I beat Granger. Well, well. And she so pretty. But the devil's black, as I always said so."

"Ginger," says the corporal, "you've a head as holler as a drum, and nobody can knock nothing out of it but noise. Tell me," he says, "if you think so ill of her, has she stabbed *you*?"

"No," says Ginger.

"Well," says the corporal, and holds up the knife, "whose blood is this on the blade?"

Well, Ginger stood staring and dumb, and the corporal took his light and inspected the ground and came back, and says he, "Ginger Smith," he

says, "try and get what I tell you inside of your hopeless head, so that you may be more modest. This poor black woman," says the corporal, "has watched you all night, creeping in your tracks and guarding of your life. By an' bye she stalks the Pathan as is stalking you, and she knifes him. He cuts and runs, leaving a bloody trail behind him, and *you* turns about and shoots the brave wench as saved your life."

Well, when Ginger hears this he stands staring at the corporal in his wooden way, and never says one single word. And the corporal he kneels down aside of Susan, and says he, "The lass may be black as him you mentioned, Private Smith, but her blood is as red as yours—as you see, and her face more handsome." And the corporal kisses Susan on the forehead and says, "God bless her," and the patrol, I being one of 'em, picks her up and carries her back to camp, and Ginger stood on his post like a graven image, neither seeing nor saying nothing.

And when we got to the camp the officer o' the guard came and looked at Susan, and he said she had done noble, and had been most unfortunate, and then he says to the corporal: "But maybe, corporal," he says,—“maybe it is better as it is, and the poor girl might have ended worse.”
Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Shovels. Now, whether Ginger were sorry, or whether he changed his idea of black people being full of nothing but sin, is more than I know. But two things seems pretty clear: one is that Ginger Smith was an ignorant mule, and the other is that what the officer said was true, and that Black-eyed Susan might have died worse.

Father Peter. Amen!

THE FOOL AND THE WOMAN

PRIVATE PETER STUMPIT'S STORY

STUMPIT. So true as this story is, you'll mis-doubt it at the beginning when I say as there's always been one in every generation of our family born foolish.

Ryan. The statement has truth in the oies iv it.

Stumpit. Moreover, in every generation one son, and no more, 'as heard the drum a-callin'.

Sometimes both them misfortunes 'as 'appened to the same man; an' that's 'ow it was with me Uncle Tom. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Me Uncle Tom was a well-growed, clean-skinned young feller, with the eyes an' the smile of a baby, and the manners of a good gel from Sunday school, and me mother often told me as he was turned of two-and-twenty afore anyone knowed he'd a crack in him. And yet he turned out the crackedest pot in the family set.

In most ways me Uncle Tom was more quieter, more steadier and level-headed than here and

there one, but when it come to soldiers he was mad, and when it come to women he was a *fool*. Lots o' men is foolish when it comes to women, but me Uncle Tom wasn't jest foolish, he was a *fool*.

Now, a man may have scarlet fever, and small blame to him. There's a laughin' devil in the fife, and a dancin' devil in the drum, and him as *hears* 'em 'as only one coorse. Whether 'is luck's a wooden leg, or whether 'is luck's a Victoria Cross, he's got to follow when the drum calls. It 'appens to the best, an' it 'appens to the worst, and it finds the Queen with fightin' dogs, an' keeps the game alive. But *women*! What's a woman!

CHORUS. *Boots!*

Andy White. That's your question, Peter. Can yo' answer it yoursen?

Chalker. You'll always find a woman at the back of sin.

Ryan. Whin the divvle, the blaggarrd, wants souls to be fryin', he goes to market disguised in skirrts.

Goodchild. T' world would ha' been a jolly good billet if there'd been no women.

Andy White. And what mak' of a man would yo' ha' been, corp'l, if yo'd nivver 'ad a mother?

Billie Black. Mon, Andy, there's some truth in what you say.

Stumpit. Mothers is mothers. *I'm* talkin' about gels. What I say is as a man, be he ever so daft, never acts the goat entirely until he finds a gel to lead him. A man in liquor's a ninny and a nuisance, but there's nothin' so despicable as a man in love. Now, me Uncle Tom was gettin' to years o' discretion afore 'e disgraced hisself, but once he started the looney business he loonied it in such a way as every calf on his father's farm was made to blush for 'im. As for the family, they was fit to run the country with upright and down-straight shame. And all the cold sense they gave him was wasted: he was so full o' foolishness that he'd nowhere to put it, and argufyin' with him was like tryin' to blow out a fire with a pair of bellows. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs.*

Stumpit. There was a slip of a gel Uncle Tom went to school with. They was comrades, in a kid's way, and used to rob orchards, make mud-pies, play tip-cat, and fight with each other, until Tom went to boardin'-school and got too much sense to play with gels.

Then the gel growed, as gels do grow, in their silly fashion, till she was all legs an' wings, an' elbers and knees, with a big plait o' black hair down her back like a horse's tail o' May mornin'. You know the kind o' green wench I mean; one as wore her hat crooked, tried to throw stones

like a boy, and giggled every time a dog barked or a whiff o' blue shadder fell across the sunny road. Mother said she seemed a harmless, heedless hussy, an' nobody guessed what was in her. But where is there a simpler, sillier-lookin' thing than an egg, and yet a crocodile may come out of it as likely as a hen if 'tis laid that way.

Uncle Tom could see no farther than the rest o' them, and when he came home from school would pass the suckin' witch with a cool nod, not thinkin' it fit for his dignity to take more notice to her. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Then the gel went to boardin'-school, stayed there three or four year, an' come back a woman. She were a real woman, too. All made up o' loveliness and sin. Even the gels owned as she was 'andsome an' clever. Mother wasn't soft on her, you may guess; but mother said she were as pretty as a bunch o' flowers, as proud as a swan, and as selfish as a robin, as will take yer crumbs without a "Thank you," steal the hair off your head to line her nest with, and sing "hey-derry-down" on your tombstone, with never a thought outside her own affairs. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. A few days after she got back home Uncle Tom overtook her coming out of church, and, not knowin' her, opened the gate for her

in his perlite way. When she got through the gate she turned round and said, "Thank you, Master Tom," and Tom says, "Carrie?" and they stood and looked at each other across the gate. She looked at him, smilin', with her big black eyes wide open, and one black curl flutterin' against a carnation-pink cheek, and he looked at her with the look of a startled deer, his lips parted, and all the blood in his body creepin' back in shivers to his 'art. His look tickled her vanity and warmed her wickedness; but hers drew his soul right out at his open lips, as easy as drawing a silk handkerchief through a weddin' ring.

And that's where this yarn begins. It begins with a fool and a woman swappin' eyes at a churchyard gate in the middle of a crowd o' sensible and respectable Sussex folk, of which they took no more notice than if they was so many cocks and hens. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Uncle Tom knew nothing at all about women. He did not even know that half the girls in the parish was spoons on him. But he knew that he was hungry an' thirsty for Carrie Hickson's favour, and he went a fool's way to win it. When a man gives himself away like a penny balloon, a woman naturally takes him cheap. Me Uncle Tom followed Carrie as if he'd been a sheep dog, spoke to her like a child sayin' 'is prayers,

listened to her as if she'd been a band, and looked at her as you'd look at a sky full o' stars.

He was too humble and too quiet by half. A fisherman likes a fish as gives sport, and a girl likes a lover as is restive and troublesome. Me Uncle Tom were a fool. He loved her like father, mother, brother, comrade, and lover all rolled into one. He guessed every wish of her before she wished it, and made it good before she could refuse. He would walk twenty miles to fetch her a letter or a sheet of music. He would have pawned his watch to buy her a prize puppy-dog. He paid mad prices for fancy rose-cuttings or graftings of rare fruit trees, he bore all manner of snubs and insults to get her ball tickets, or a seat at a concert, or a place in a drag to the races. Nothin' was too hard for him to do, and nothin' was good enough for her to have. His sisters were disgusted, and his father funk'd goin' to market because the other farmers would pity him for having a barmy son. And the woman took it all as a flower takes rain. It was what was due to her, and it helped her to feel proud of herself; but a little bit o' swagger would have pleased more than seven years' service, or maybe if me uncle had seemed harder to catch she'd have felt interested in catching him. But he couldn't see that. He were a fool.

He couldn't even see it when he were told. Me mother tried him.

"Tom," she says, "I'm ashamed of you. Why do you run after that woman as if she was salvation?"

"So she is," says he, "for losing her would be hell."

"Nonsense, Tom," says me mother. "She's a giddy, selfish woman with a pretty face, and no more heart than a roastin'-jack. The only good thing about her is that she never pretends to care a potato-paring about you. Why don't you let her alone? She'd thank you for *that*. You only make her vexed with everlasting treadin' on her shadow."

"I love her shadow," says the daft chap.

"Fiddlesticks!" says me mother. "You waste your money, and your time, and yourself on her, for nothing. She doesn't thank you."

"I don't want her to thank me," says me poor uncle.

"Bother the man!" says me mother. "Tom, you're no better than a baby. What do you expect to get for all this kindness?"

"Meg," says me uncle, "isn't Carrie fond o' roses?"

Me mother sniffed, and said, "Oh, I s'pose she is, and so's lots o' better gels."

"Well," says Uncle Tom, "and isn't she fond o'

white doves and toy terriers, and music and theaters?"

"She is," says me mother,—“and all sorts o’ vanity and foolishness.”

"That's it," says me uncle, "and havin' them things pleases her. And I *want* her to be pleased. That's what I'm here for. That's what I was born for."

"Well, of all the loonies I ever heard rave," says me mother, "you are the very looniest. What good does it do *you*?"

"It pleases her," says Uncle Tom, "and that pays me. Am I not happy while her eyes are bright?"

After that me mother gave him up. And quite right too. He *were* a fool. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

The Wee Mon. Mon, Peter, ye're overdoing it. 'Tis no reasonable to suppose a man that foolish. 'Tis agen nature.

Ryan. Close up, orange-blossom. No tale is improbable whin there's a woman in ut.

Stumpit. It's an old tale enough, Wee Mon, and 'as always been true enough, worse luck. Why, even me Uncle Tom wasn't as big a fool as Samson.

The Wee Mon. That's different. Samson was no a Sussex mon.

Corpl. Goodchild. *Boots!*

Stumpit. Natural a woman would find such continuous idolatry as tiresome as sweet tea and raspberry jam at every meal, so Miss Carrie took her lap-dog of a lover into the garden one night and let him say his silly say. Not bein' born at that time, an' me mother not bein' present, I don't know what daft things me uncle spoke. I s'pose 'e talked a lot of dam poetry stuff like the slobberin' 'ero in a weepy play, but I do know as he got the bullet, the woman offerin' to be 'is sister, or 'is cousin, or 'is aunt, or anything but what 'e wanted 'er to be, an' then I expex as 'e went 'ome an' axed God to neglect 'is business an' take care o' Miss Hickson; and she took a square meal, and went to bed, thankin' Heaven she was rid of a fool. In which, however, she were mistaken. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. There was a farmer's son named George Somers, as ran wild an' follered the drum, an' about the time I'm tellin' of he came 'ome on leave, with 'is sergeant's stripes, an' 'is wicked eyes, and 'is soldier's impident trick 'o givin' gas to women.

He were a big, swaggerin', showy chap, with one o' them well-shaped, cheeky, stupid faces as women calls 'andsome, an' 'e went about the village drinkin' beer, smokin' cigars, swellin' 'is chest an' slappin' 'is shoulder an' tellin' lies as if

'e'd been there on recruitin' service. He were the kind of a man as any soldier would know at sight for a bully and a leg; but none o' the village folk was soldiers, and one on 'em were a woman.
Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. So's luck had it, one evenin' after market, when the inn near the market-place were full o' neighbours, Mister Sergeant Somers were showin' off in the bar afore a crowd o' young farmers as was paying for his drinks, when in comes me Uncle Tom a-lookin' for 'is father.

Jest as 'e comes in the door 'e 'ears the sergeant a-sayin', "No, lads, I don't think much o' your wenches 'ere. They're too dam goody-goody, an' too dam beefy for my taste. But there's one as is a sweet moss rose, an' I'm the man as will pluck her from the parent stem an' wear 'er in 's 'at."

"Who's the beauty, sergeant?" asked one young feller, and the sergeant grins in 'is conceited way and pulls 'is moustaches up an' 's shell-jacket down, an' says he, in a loud voice, "Pretty Carrie Hickson is the gel. She's *my* sort. She's my feather, she's my flame; damme, if she were as well off as well lookin', I think I'd marry 'er. Yes, I would, begad."

At that me Uncle Tom was shakin' wild, and shoves 'is way through the crowd o' young yokels till 'e reaches the sergeant, when he says, "By

what right, soldier, do you dare to speak them words in a tap-room about that lady? "

Well, the sergeant looks me uncle up an' down, and says 'e, quite cool an' cheeky, "That's *my* business, me lord-dook," says he, "*and hers!* "

"You lie," says me uncle, half chokin' with rage,—“you lie, you boozy braggart,” and with the word he smacks the sergeant flat-'anded across the cheek, and got in exchange for the compliment a straight drive in the jaw, as sent him staggering against the wall.

Well, of course, the company stood clear and give them room, and the two men stepped towards each other and put up their 'ands, and there was goin' to be a fight worth seein', when the swing door flew open an' in stepped Farmer Somers, the father o' Sergeant George, who was a straight an' strict old buff-stick, an' a churchwarden and J.P.

"Stop that," says old Somers in his masterful way. "George, you move a hand at your peril. Mr. Gaythorne, no breach of the peace, sir. Gentlemen, part these men."

Well, the sergeant were feared of his father, and the other fellows were feared o' the J.P., so the fight were stopped, and the sergeant walked off, his father telling him as he went that he'd disgrace his family and die in a ditch unless he mended his gait o' living. "And what was the quarrel about?" he asks me uncle, and when me uncle told him

what had happened, the old man looked at him in a curious way, as much as to say "poor devil," and says he, "Tom, you're a good lad, but you're less woman-wise than you will be when your 'air is grey"; and so saying he went about his business, and left me Uncle Tom to take the hint if he'd sense enough, which he hadn't. He were a fool, an' to ax him to give up his folly were as much use as axing a cat to stop watching a canary in its cage.

'Course Uncle Tom never thought of such a thing as the sergeant tellin' the truth, nor of Carrie listenin' to his lies. To him the sergeant were a boastful cad, an' 'e thought Carrie would see with 'is eyes.

I need not explain as me uncle were mistook. We know what women is: they loves soundin' brass better than fine gold, and being fond o' dress an' colour they're dearly in love with a uniform.

Afore 'e were three days older me Uncle Tom sees Carrie a-walkin' in the fields with George Somers. Afore 'e were six days older 'e 'ears tell o' the sergeant kissin' 'er in 'er own garden. Whereat me Uncle Tom flares up and boils over, flyin' in the face o' providence by refusin' 'is food an' a-hidin' of hisself in the woods, an' a-mopin' among the 'ills, as if there weren't neither green in the grass, nor light in the sky, nor joy in sound

roast beef an' good beer any more for ever and ever, amen, because one woman was vain an' one man foolish. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. An' the upshot of 't were as me uncle threw away 'is chances, turned 'is back on 'is 'ome an' 'is friends, an' went off on the king's 'ighway to play the mug's game, as they calls "seekin' yer fortin." 'E wandered from town to town, not lookin' for work, but only tryin' to get away from hisself, an' so it 'appened as one fine mornin', when the wind was full o' garden scents, an' the oaks was green, an' the swallows was swimmin' through and above the sleepy streets of a Surrey village, singing out "good business" to each other as they flew, a regiment came by on the march, an' me uncle 'eard the drum a-callin', an' follered with 'is 'art in 'is mouth an' 'is blue eyes dazzled with starin' at what no man never see'd except in dreams. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. That's 'ow it 'appened as me Uncle Tom enlisted into the "Die-'ards," an' went on service to Injia a year afore the Mutiny; but I cannot tell you 'ow it was as 'e 'appen'd to jine the very corps in which George Somers were a sergeant. *That, I reckon, was fate.*

So it were, however, and what is more curious still, when me Uncle Tom had done 'is recruit's

drill an' went out with a draft to Bombay, the first thing 'e 'ad the pleasure of seeing was Carrie Hickson settled down in married quarters as the wife of Sergeant Somers.

Sergt. Peel. I'm not at all surprised to hear it, Peter. The ten-a-penny gods have a way of arranging these little surprises for us. They have a quick sense of humour, the ten-a-penny ones.

Stumpit. Uncle Tom were awful cut up at first, an' took to drink an' were landed, but 'is captain begged 'im off and talked to 'im afterwards like a father. "Gaythorne," says the captain—me uncle's name was Gaythorne—"you are a good soldier," 'e says, "an' a superior sort of man. Why 'ave you give way to drink?"

"Sir," says me uncle, "I'm in great trouble, an' I don't care."

"Me lad," says the captain, "trouble comes to all men, but disgrace only comes to bad ones. Take yer gruel like a man," says he, "an' never forget your own honour nor the honour of the regiment."

With that me Uncle Tom salutes, and says he, "Thank you, sir, an' never again will I forget meself, nor you, sir."

And as 'e said, so 'e done. And glad 'e was of it ever after.

Now Sergeant Somers, as I hinted afore, were a wrong un'. For a while 'e kept straight, an'

only bullied 'is wife enough to make 'er love 'im the better; but after a while 'e drank more, neglected 'is duty more, and ill-treated Carrie more still.

He were pegged for drunk, an' admonished, wheeled for creatin' a row in the patch an' threatenin' to strike 'is wife with a chair, an' got off through 'is wife's soft tears an' 'ard swearin'; but at last it were a case o' drunk on duty an' a district coort-martial, an' 'is stripes come off in the process, an' 'e went to duty as a private.

It's easier fallin' downstairs than climbin' up a ladder. George drank an' raved an' got pack drill an' cells, an' 'is wife hid 'er tears an' 'eld 'er tongue, an' me Uncle Tom boxed an' fenced an' jungled 'isself half dead to keep 'isself from murder or suicide, an' time went on an' there were rumours of disaffection in the native army. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. There wasn't war yet, but there was rumours of war, an' old Billy Fierres, the colonel o' the "Die-'ards," could smell gunpowder in the air, an' were in consequence growin' restive an' snarly, an' were pawin' the ground an' snortin' flames an' curses like an old war 'oss tuggin' agin the rein.

Colonel Fierres, or Billy Blazes, as the men called 'im, were a fearful old buff-stick o' the old blast-an'-brimstone school. One as rode

'ard, fought 'ard, drank 'ard, swore 'ard, an' feared nothin' from 'ell's gates to the North Pole an' back agen. 'E 'ad a temper like a box o' fireworks, a tongue like a bumboat woman, an' the thirst of a Dutch pilot. But drunk or sober, angry or amiable, hot or cold, on parade or in action, 'e never forgot discipline, an' 'e never did nothin' in a hurry. Out in the Crimea as 'e were leadin' 'is men up Alma Heights he kept two paces ahead the line, goin' it on foot, for 'is 'orse was shot, an' steppin' a thirty inch pace to the fraction of an inch; an' when the grape played skittles with the men an' they pressed forward quicker, 'e says quite cool, "Don't 'urry the time, men; don't 'urry the time," an' then 'e looks along the front an' 'e sees a man a foot ahead of his fellers, an' 'e calls out, "Dress back, Hooligan. I see enough of your ugly face at orderly room; dress back, man, you'll spoil the whole affair." *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Billy Blazes bein' that sort of a man, an' the times bein' what they was, it would have paid George Somers to keep steady and soldier strict, instead of which 'e gets mad drunk on country liquor, an' hits the corporal o' the picquet a lick on the ear with a tent peg.

That was the finish to his long list o' black marks. 'E was granted an interview with Billy

Blazes, an' Billy Blazes ordered him fifty lashes.
Boots !

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Stumpit. Mrs. Somers had no reason to love her 'usband; but women don't work to reason. They 'ad quarrelled; and maybe she might often 'ave wished the goold 'ad never been dug to make 'er weddin' ring. But however them two stood to each other, it's quite certain as Carrie were woeful cut up when she 'eard what the colonel 'ad done, an' she tried all she knew to save 'er man from punishment an' disgrace.

She went to the captain, an' 'e told 'er no officer in the regiment durst as much as mention pardon to Billy Blazes. She tried the senior major, an' 'e only shook 'is 'ead. She went on 'er knees to the doctor, and 'e said he were sorry and better sorry, but if he risked swearin' 'er 'usband sick the colonel would have the doctor 'isself reported as a lunatic.

Then the woman sat down in the jungle for an hour an' cried, an' then she dried her eyes, set her teeth tight together, and sent for me Uncle Tom. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Stumpit. Me uncle met Mrs. Somers in a tope o' trees near the camp, an' the pair o' them enjoyed theirselves about as much as two cats hung by their tails across a clothes-line.

The woman was raw an' haughty, for besides havin' always rather despised me uncle for bein' so ridiculous fond of her, she were mortal angry with him for bein' good an' manly, when her 'usband had turned out a failure and a wrong un'.

Me uncle was smartin' all over like a new-whipped dog. 'E were mad because 'is idol 'ad come down out of 'er heaven and throwed 'erself away on a rowdy clown, an' 'is 'art ached to see marks o' trouble an' tears in 'er pretty face, and to feel 'ow 'er poor pride were fightin' to keep down 'er sobs an' cover up 'er shame.

So they stood lookin' at each other for a while; but not like they'd looked in the village churchyard less than a year afore. An' at last the woman says, "I sent for you because I 'ave not a friend in my need, an' I wonder whether you was only romancin' when you said as you'd never fail me at a pinch."

"Mrs. Somers," says me uncle, an' 'is voice were shivery an' 'oarse, "if I can 'elp you, speak. I am yours while me blood is red. Spend me as you'd spend the poorest coin in your own purse."

At that the woman looked him in the eyes, an' the fool saw 'er astonishment, an' felt it like a stab.

"Sir," says she, "my 'usband is in the guard tent, with a sentry over 'im and 'an'cuffs on

'is 'ands. To-morrer," she says, gulpin' down a sob, "they'll—they'll punish 'im, an' they'll murder me."

Me uncle stood silent as a tree; 'is flesh were creepin', an' 'is teeth chattered in 'is 'ead.

"Tom," says the woman, whisperin' quick an fierce, "if you love me—if you are a man"—

Me uncle nodded twice, an' the woman laid 'er 'and upon 'is shoulder, and says, "Your enemy is in trouble. He hates you; I love 'im. Help 'im to escape."

"Carrie," says me uncle, "I'd lay me life down freely if that would buy 'is liberty. But if I'd fifty lives, an' spent 'em all, I could not win that prisoner out of that guard tent."

"Go!" she says, givin' 'im a scornful push of her 'and. "Go!" she says, "you poor coward. I despise you!"

Me Uncle Tom turned on 'is 'eel an' left her.
Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Now me Uncle Tom were on picquet duty that night, an' were posted sentry by a plank bridge a mile away from camp.

'E were on sentry from twelve to two, and 'e stood still in one spot all the first hour, a-thinkin' of the woman and her trouble, an' what she'd said to 'im, an' what it meant to 'im and to 'er.

An' the more 'e thought of it all the more obstinate 'e clung to the mad idea as 'is duty were to 'elp 'er as angels 'elp sinners, or a dog 'is master, no matter what it costs to do it, an' no matter whether they deserve it or not.

If me uncle could have changed places with the prisoner, or saved him at the cost of 'is own life, 'e'd have done it, an' been glad. But to get a prisoner out of the guard tent an' through the lines 'e knew to be impossible.

"If he were a man," says me uncle to hisself, "'ed kill 'isself to save 'er; but 'e's a brute an' will be whipped like a brute—and live."

Me uncle bit 'is lips till the blood came, an' racked 'is brains till 'is 'ead ached, but could see no way to steal that miserable rat from the cat's claws on the morrow.

"There's no 'ope," said me uncle, "no chance nowhere," an' as 'e spoke 'e 'eard footsteps comin' toward 'is post from the other side o' the stream.

It were a moonlight night, an' me uncle stood at 'is end o' the bridge with 'is rifle at the shoulder waitin'. "'Tis a soldier's step," said 'e, and then, "'tis the step of a soldier with drink in 'im," an' then, "be George, 'tis an officer, for I 'ear the sword," and then again, "a field officer, for I 'ear the spurs," an' with that there steps out o' the silver haze into the cold moonlight on the bridge no less a person

than Lieutenant-Colonel Billy Blazes, returnin' from the camp o' the Red Hussars with a skin full o' wine an' a liver like a red-hot curry.
Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Directly me uncle claps eyes on the colonel a mad ijea comes into 'is crazy, love-sick mind, bein' put there most like by Old Nick, or one of his imps of malice.

You may have 'eard, some of you, a wild old lie, as have gone the rounds among soldiers for generations, about the Iron Dook. Anyhow, the cuffer runs as old nosey were walkin' alone 'tween camps, when 'e met a wicked devil of a Connaught Ranger carryin' a sheep he'd looted from a Portygee farmer. So the Dook asks the man 'is name, and then orders 'im to report 'imself to the provost-sergeant to be shot in the morning. Soon as the Dook moves on the Connaught man lays down the sheep and brings 'is musket to the ready. "Sir," says he, with 'is eye on the general and 'is finger on the trigger, "might I ax a favour iv yer Honour?" "What's that?" says the Dook, turnin' round. "Jest the free pardon of the poor soldier yer Honour has just ordered to be shot," says Paddy; "for," says he, "iv it is not convanient to yer Honour to do that same, 'twill be obligatory upon me to blow yer Honour's brains out."

You may have heard the yarn, and how the Dook of Wellington passed 'is word of honour for the man's pardon. Well, this fool of a tale come into me uncle's fool of a head, and says he to himself, "By God, I'll make the colonel pardon Somers to-night, if he shoots me for mutiny to-morrow."

At that old Billy Blazes stepped off the bridge, and me uncle ported arms and challenged, "'Alt—oo—comes—there?" an' the colonel answers "Friend," an' me uncle says, "Stand, friend, advance one and give the countersign." An' the colonel pulls hisself together, an' me uncle comes to the charge, and the colonel walks up to the point o' the bayonet an' gives the word "Die hard," an' me uncle, instead o' comin' to the shoulder and passin' 'im, says, "Please to stand, sir, while I ask a favour. An' please to answer now."

When old Billy Blazes heard the sentry talkin' in that insolent way 'e misdoubted 'is own ears an' blamed it on the wine. "Curse the port," he growled to hisself; "it's addled me 'ead. I must be gettin' old, begad; runnin' to seed." Then he finds hisself an' roars out, "Hell's angels, man, why don't you shoulder an' pass me? Didn't you hear the countersign?"

"I did, sir," says me uncle, grippin' 'is rifle tight, "but I want another word from you afore you can pass."

"Brute's drunk," says the colonel;—"blind, beastly, silly drunk." Then 'e roars out again, "What word do you want, you pig?—What word do you want?"

"Sir," says me uncle, quiet an' desp'rate, "I want your word of honour."

"By the shadow of death!" says Billy Blazes, "you're either a double-damned mutineer or a treble-damned loonatic. Shoulder your *arms*!"

"Sir," says me uncle, cool and steady, "there's a man named Somers in the guard tent under sentence of fifty lashes. Give me your word of honour to pardon 'im an' I'll shoulder an' pass you now. Refuse your word of honour to that and I'll shoot you dead where you stand, an' may the Lord 'ave mercy on both our souls: amen. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Only for 'is fool-roguin' romance me Uncle Tom were not such a confirmed donkey as to do what he did that night. But the woman had got into 'is blood an' 'is brains was curdled. He actually thought as old Blazes would want to save his skin. An' when 'e turned purple an' green an' gasped like a new-landed salmon, me uncle thought it were funk. Instead o' which it were astonishment an' disgust, as 'e soon found out.

"This," says old Billy, when 'e got 'is breath,—
"this is God's judgment on me."

Me uncle gripped 'is rifle tight an' looked fierce.

"What 'ave I done?" says the colonel agen. "Just an' awful 'eaven, what 'ave I done?" 'e says, "as a man of me own regiment, a soldier of the Die-'ards, should be capable of a dirty act of insubordination as would disgrace a blackguardly Cockney tailor on strike?"

Me uncle answered never a word.

"God forgive me, a sinner," says the colonel; "to think what I've done for my regiment. To think 'ow I've drilled 'em an' drubbed 'em, fiddled 'em an' fried 'em, peppered an' salted 'em, nursed an' dandled 'em, damned an' double-damned 'em from Southsea Common to Sebastapol an' from Sebastapol to the Punjaub, begad, an' now, by the last trump, I've an outpost sentry as would get the rogues' march from the Spanish Militia. *Blast me!*" With that the colonel chokes down a sob an' lowers his eyes from 'eaven to the face of me Uncle Tom.

The two men stood for a minute glarin' at each other. They were two of the finest men in the army, but at that instant Billy Blazes were the finer. 'E were six foot in 'is shoes, bull-necked, an' flanked like a stallion. His 'air an' moustache was white, though he were not fifty years of age, and 'is face a deep port-winey red, an' 'is two eyes like balls o' black fire. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. At last the colonel spoke. Says he, "It's hard, begad, I did think to be shot by a soldier; even if it had been a damned black soldier, begad."

"Sir," says me uncle, "you have only to give your word of honour."

Then old Blazes opened fire. "Me word of honour," says 'e, growlin' like a tiger over a bone,—"me word of dishonour. To *you*? To this? Why, you white-livered gaol-delivery, you three-a-penny pot-house pirate, you paltry mutinous disgrace to England an' the regimental colour, do you know who you're talkin' to?"

"I give you ten seconds," says me uncle, his own face turnin' as white as the colonel's was red.

"Ten seconds!" roars old Blazes, with a snarl of a laugh;—"ten years, ten slow-burnin', deep-bitin', hell's gridiron centuries! Bark, dog, an' show your mongrel teeth."

"Your blood on your own head," says me uncle, 'is mouth as dry as ashes an' 'is knees feelin' weak.

Then the colonel looked up to 'eaven agen, and in a solemn voice put up this prayer: "May I never see red nor swear black again, may I never taste punch nor cut another throat, between now an' the last réveille. May all the little



"NOW, YOU DIRTY CONSCRIPT; TAKE YOUR SHOT, . . ."

wrigglin', slimy, green-eyed, bandy-shinned, gap-toothed imps in the band o' the devil's bodyguard sit round me dyin' bed an' whistle French songs through their noses if I'm not ashamed o' me country an' me cloth."

Then he give me uncle a look of icy contempt, an' says 'e—

"Now, you dirty conscript; take your shot, an' I'll either cut your throat or go to hell an' find discipline. Fire."

Me Uncle Tom didn't fire. His head were full o' buzzes, an' 'is eyes were full o' tears. 'E stood for two long seconds with 'is baynet almost prick-in' the colonel's chest, an' then 'e flung 'is rifle into the shoulder an' sung out, "Pass, friend, all's well."

Then the colonel stood straight and still for another two seconds, an' from the direction of the jungle in rear of the camp there came one, two, three shots.

At that the colonel moved on, an' me uncle presented arms, an' the colonel saluted as 'e passed away. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stumpit. Me uncle stood at the shoulder as stiff as Lot's wife, and tried to understand what a general all-round ass he'd made of hisself. He'd made two mistakes. He were mistook in supposin' as old Billy Blazes would show the white

feather, an' he was mistook in supposin' that he would be capable of shootin' the colonel in cold blood for bein' a man. But drunken men, fools, and monkeys 'as wonderful luck, an' me uncle wasn't born to be shot for mutiny.

The shots as sounded from rear of the camp was from snipers, and the first of them found its billet in the prisoners' tent in the brain of George Somers. More shots followed, and as the colonel went marchin' up to the guard tent there came a volley, an' both the sergeant of the guard and Billy Blazes went down mortally wounded. The colonel never spoke again, and so me uncle's luck saved him.

But 'avin' done that much, it did as luck will do: it turned right round, and when the relief came up to the bridge to relieve me Uncle Tom they found 'im stretched out in a dead faint, with one bullet through his left knee and another through his right shoulder. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Andy White. So, then, your uncle was nursed by the interestin' widder, an' they was married an' lived happy ever after.

Stumpit. This is my cuffer, Andy, and my way is to tell the plain bread-an'-butter truth. Me uncle was sent down to hospital, where he lay some months, and was then invalided home. After a good while he found his way back to the village,

and in his own sentimental fashion off he goes to look at the house where Carrie used to live, instead of making straight for his own kith an' kin. It were just a year from the day me uncle was shot when he walked over the fields on a bright quiet evenin' to look at the sacred cottage, and you can tell whether he were struck dumb with astonishment when I tell you that the first sight as met his eyes was Carrie in the garden, in a big sun-bonnet, waterin' the flowers as if nothin' 'ad 'appened, an' she'd never been away. She was very friendly to 'im, askin' after 'is wound, an' 'opin' 'e was meanin' to stop in England an' think no more o' soldierin' an' such folly.

"There's all sorts o' folly," said me uncle, an' 'e up an' told 'er of 'is interview with Colonel Fierres.

When 'e'd finished 'is tale, Carrie reaches out 'er 'and an' says, "Thank you, Tom; it was very good of you to do all that for the sake of my poor 'usband."

"I didn't do it for 'is sake," says me uncle; "I did it for your sake, Carrie."

"Well," she says, "it was very kind of you, an' very brave, an' I'm glad you told me. I shall never forget it—never."

With that my uncle squeezes 'er 'and very tight, an' says 'e, "Carrie, you know I love you. Now you are free, will you marry me?"

Carrie put down the water-can, an' turns as pale

as cream. "My God, Tom," she says, lookin' at 'im 'ard, "'as nobody told you?"

"Told me what?" says me uncle, 'is 'art going cold, an' 'is brains beginning to sing like a kettle.

"Why," says the woman, hanging her empty pretty head, an' for once in her life lookin' ashamed of herself—"why," says she, "I'm married already. I was married the day after I reached England to a colour-sergeant of marines. Me 'usband 'as just gone up into the village to get some fruit for tea; 'e's awful fond of fruit."

When me uncle 'eard these words 'e dropped the woman's 'and, turned on 'is 'eel, an' walked away without so much as a good-evenin', an' 'e were never seen in that village agen.

Andy White. Biggest fools 'as t' best o' t' luck.

Stumpit. Me uncle didn't see it in that light. Off he went to America, where 'e knocked about fightin' Injins, diggin' for gold, workin' an' trampin' an' torturin' 'is sick soul as a fool will for the sake of a woman, till at last he got an ijea that Carrie might be left poor, an' he must work to provide for 'er. That he did, and died at forty-five, leavin' a fortune of ten thousand pounds to her, an' a will full o' love an' blessings an' other foolishness. For nothin' under the skies could cure 'im of 'is craze for that woman.

Andy White. There's only one thing would have cured him.

Stumpit. Marryin' her? But he never did that. She were a widder agen two years before he died, an' when she 'eard o' the fortune, out she goes to the States an' marries a third time. She was forty then, an' she married a young feller o' twenty-nine, an' set 'im up in the timber trade, where 'e made a heap o' money. But as for me Uncle Tom, if any flowers grew on his grave, they wasn't watered with tears.

Sergt. Peel. I think he deserved a tear, Peter. He seems to me to have been worth a good many. But, of course, she had no heart.

Stumpit. It was as it 'ad to be, sergeant. She were a woman, an' 'e were a fool. There isn't any more to say to it. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

A D.S.M.

PRIVATE SIDNEY STAMP'S STORY

PRIVATE BILBY. Are you asleep, Stamp?

Pte. Stamp. No, I'm thinking how I'll lay out my deferred pay when my time's in.

Bilby. Tell us how you got your Distinguished Service Medal.

Tim Doyle. Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stamp. Why, the fact is I got it very soft.

Bilby. I *don't* think. When a chap's got a D.S.M. you may bet he's fetched it out of a middling warm corner. They don't in general throw 'em at you.

Stamp. No? But it's a true fact that I got my D.S.M. for running away.

Bilby. I'd like to hear how you worked that. It's a quiff worth knowing. Give us the griffin how it's done.

Stamp. Anything to oblige. Tell the truth and shame the devil. More things happen on service than ever get into the evening papers. This is one of the things that happened in the

Tirah campaign, and it never got advertised in the *Gazette*. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stamp. How it happened or why it happened I never could understand. Must have been like Drummer Fidler's whiskers, a sort of a judgment.

Our chaps had been well peppered and salted and were as hard as nails. They'd done some stiff work, and had done it well. As for the Gurkhas, they always were fighters, and keener, greedier fighters no one could wish for.

There were about eight hundred of us all told, four hundred of ours and four hundred of the Gurkhas. We started out at three in the morning on a turning movement. The enemy were holding a valley. They were to be attacked in front by an infantry brigade and some guns, and we were to scramble over some hills and take them in flank and rear.

We had a long march, and it was cold. We had blue noses and numbed fingers, and the boots were nearly frozen on our feet after wading the snow streams. Then we lost our direction, and had to cross two hills instead of one. We scrambled up to the top of the first hill without a shot fired, and we crossed the top in the same way, but when it came to getting down the other side it was stony. It wasn't a hill we had to go

down, it was a blooming precipice. The side was nearly straight up and down, all covered with boulders and loose shingle. It would be quite five hundred feet deep, and in the valley at the bottom, behind shrubs and walls, were the Pathans, armed with Martinis.

To make it jollier for us, we had to turn our backs to the fire and climb down with our hands and feet, and all the while we climbed the beggars potted at us, and every man who was hit pitched out backwards and went summersaulting down to smash on the rocks below. We lost two officers and seventeen men coming down that wall. They were all killed.

However, we did it. The little Gurkhas on the left, and our men on the right, and we reached the valley out of temper and out of breath. I can tell you it wanted a bit of doing. Green hands would never have done it. Our colonel said it was a very plucky piece of work, and he was proud of us. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stamp. When we got down to the level and formed up for the attack, we found the beggars had bolted from their position in the valley, and were retiring as fast as their legs would carry them up the other hill. The other hill was not so steep as the one we came down, but it was steep enough, and the enemy was getting away up two or three

irregular roads that had been cut slantwise across the face. They were getting away very slippery, and the Gurkhas being nearer to their line of retreat than we were set off at the double across the valley to follow them. They had crossed the valley and were at the foot of the lowest road, and our men coming up as fast as they could to race for the lead, when all at once a volley was fired into the Gurkhas from a line of scrub and boulders farther up, and on our side of the valley. The volley was close and well meant, and it brought down four or five officers and quite a dozen men of the Gurkhas, and then, how it happened I don't know—you never do know these things—but a score of the Gurkhas turned and ran. They ran full tilt into the leading company of ours as it came up, and then another volley came, and before you could say "Bless your eyes" the Gurkhas and our men were mixed up, and the whole lot bolting for dear life down the valley; officers shouting, men swearing, Gurkhas skipping; a regular, disgraceful stampede. Talk about mules! Mules aren't half as wild nor a quarter as silly as soldiers when they *do* catch a funk. What do you think of *that*?

Bilby. Is that true?

Stamp. God's own truth. But of course it hasn't been published in general orders, nor made a song of. How far do you think we ran?

Bilby. Can't guess. It sounds like a bad dream.

Stamp. It was a waking dream. We ran, that's gospel, and we ran more than a mile.

Bilby. Never heard its equals.

Stamp. More than a mile, and that's not the worst of it. There were over seven hundred of us. Good fighting troops—crack corps. And we ran away from less than fifty half-starved savages. How do you account for *that*!

Andy White. How do you account for the Distinguished Service Medal?

Bilby. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stamp (smoking). That's it (puff). After we'd run pretty nearly a mile (puff), me and a fellow called Darley (puff) noticed that the firing sounded very thin. At last I said (puff), "Why, Jack, there cannot be many of those beggars (puff); let's stop and have a shot at 'em." "Done," says Jack (puff). So we slackened speed (puff) and fell back among the officers (puff), and I said to one of our captains (puff), "Beg pardon, sir; but there's not a great many after us, and if we can muster a dozen rifles we might check 'em." (Puff.) And the next thing I knew there were five officers and seven privates in extended order, Jack and me among 'em (puff), walking back to stop the pursuit (puff), and the

rest of our fellows still making tracks down the valley, Gurkhas and Tommies mixed.

Bilby. Put that blooming pipe down.

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stamp. Down it is. Well, back we went, taking cover and firing when we saw a head, and presently about a score more of our fellows, and as many Gurkhas, rallied and ran after us. So the Pathans, seeing us advancing, took up a good position on a low stony ridge and blazed away like billy-oh. Three of our officers were hit, and two of our men, and the rest of us stopped and took cover to wait for the second line who were coming up. See! Well, before these others came up I rose up to get a shot, and, by George, I was hit in two places at once, one in the left wrist and one in the left forearm, and over I went and rolled into a shallow stream. I thought I was killed at first, and I can assure you as I was rolling amongst the boulders the ideas went through my head like greased lightning. But before you could have got off a shot I was up on my feet again. The wrist was painful and the other wound was bleeding a good deal, but I knew they were not going to kill me, and when I'd twisted a handkerchief round my arm I was so delighted to find myself alive that I danced a couple of steps, never thinking of the bullets, and then I called out, "Come on, boys, let's give 'em

cold steel." And off I went as fast as I could run, right for the ridge where the enemy were posted. And as soon as I ran out all the others followed me, and away we went pell-mell, carried the ridge, and got among 'em with the bayonet. I believe I was first in, or one of the first, and there was one of our lieutenants, a great swell and a perfect gentleman, but he was excited, and so was I, and he swore and laid about him; by Jove, he *did* swear, and I laughed and laid about me, and the few Pathans who weren't killed ran like hares. It was all over in less than two minutes, and by that the Gurkhas and ours had rallied and reformed, and were bowling forward up the valley, ready for anything that might be brought against them.

Then an officer came up to me and shook me by the hand, and says he—well, he said a lot of nice things to me about my being brave. But I wasn't brave. I just didn't care. See! It was a kind of excitement. I was so pleased when I found I wasn't killed that I was ready to face anything. However, I was worse hit than I knew, for while the officer was talking to me the valley began to turn colours, first pink and then green, and the hills began to sway, and I heard someone ask if I was badly wounded, but his voice sounded a long way off, and then the officer put his arm round me and I fainted. That's all

I did that day, and that's what I got the medal for. Got it soft, as I told you, because the fact is, I ran as hard as anyone for near three-quarters of a mile, and I should have gone farther if I hadn't just noticed that the fire sounded thin.

Bilby. Hit twice! Not so soft that.

Stamp. The hits weren't soft. I soon found that out.

Bilby. What's it feel like when you're hit?

Stamp. Depends, *I* should say, on *where* you're hit. I was hit in the wrist and forearm. It felt as if someone had given me a swinging blow with a hammer on the wrist and then run a red-hot needle through the fleshy part of my arm just below the elbow. But it didn't hurt much—at first. Not till after I'd fainted.

Norris. That's it, Sidney; that's facts. The blow of a gunshot wound stuns you at first. It's not until the numbness passes off that you begin to enjoy yourself. When I got mine in the foot I went on with the fighting line for an hour. But later—thought I should have gone blank blazing mad.

Stamp. Just my case. When I came out of my faint I was sitting up against a boulder, and a chap of the Hospital Corps was just finishing off the bandage round my wrist. The dhoolies had been left behind; couldn't get down the

steep side o' the pass. The fighting line was just going out of sight over the other hill. The firing was quite faint to the ear. It was afternoon, and hot as an oven in that narrow slit of a valley. The Hospital Corps man gave me a drink and asked me how I felt. I said "First-rate," and looked about me. There were a few dead of ours and a good lot of the Afridis lying round, and there was another Hospital man attending to some of our wounded a few yards away. An escort of a sergeant and six file was resting in the shadow of a big rock near by. I got up and found I felt as good as new, though my wrist gave a throb every now and again, like the pain of a jumping toothache. However, I felt strong, and as jolly as if I'd just been to my own wedding. So I told the Hospital man to attend to the other wounded, and I'd find my way back to camp on my own.

"You'll never do it," said he.

"I will," said I; and then he said I was a hard-roed one, and he filled my water-bottle and told me to move slowly down the valley due south for a mile and then signal to the dhooly bearers on the cliff.

Off I went. But I was so merry and so cocksure of myself that I made my mind up to hoof it over the seven miles to camp. Now, of course, I could no more have walked seven miles than

flown it, but I felt like doing seventeen, and light enough to dance half the way. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stamp. I'll never forget that march, not till I'm dead, and ten years after. For the first couple of miles I went on swimmingly. Then I began to trip, and kick stones, and ramble out of the straight. I took a drink of water, and shoved along. Then I felt lighter. The hard bed-rock I walked on seemed like a cloud. I was empty—like a toy balloon. But I was as jolly as a sandboy, and I sang songs and talked to myself, like a fellow does when he's had a few good whiskies. And all the time the wounds hurt, only in a numb sort of way, except when the wrist gave a throb. Then I nearly bounced off the earth like a rubber ball. At last I came to a stream and waded over it. It was curious, but in the snow water my legs felt hot, and my head and body were cold in the sun. After that I turned sick, then sleepy, and I sat down with my back against the rocks, and fell asleep—or fainted. When I woke (or came round) I forgot I was hit and I went to lift my left hand. Ow, ow! I gave a frightful yell of pain. And the echo sent it back to me from the hills. And then a wild dog or a wolf began barking. I tried to get up and walk, but I was too weak. I laid my rifle across my legs, poured some cartridges out beside me, and took a drink.

Then the music began. First my wrist gave a throb that nearly lifted my cap off, then the forearm did ditto. And so they went on, turn about, as regular as a clock ticking. It was just as if a bulldog scrunched my wrist in its jaws, and then scrunched my arm, and then back on my wrist. My head ached, my throat was pinched up, and the sweat ran off me in streams. I stood it, grinding my teeth tight, for an hour or more, but the dog kept gnawing, and at last I had to howl. I howled like a hurt hound for a bit, then I thought I might attract some wild beast, or some damned savage, and I cramped down into groans. It got dark, and the wolves or wild dogs yelped and snarled about in the valley. I drank all my water, and the thirst burnt me like a fire. I cursed myself for being such a fool as to leave the dhooly man; I cursed the Afridis for shooting straight, and the Gurkhas for bolting. I wasn't gay any more, you may lay to that. I got a bit maudlin with the pain, and I called out for my mother, and—I cried. Yes; I cried like a sick kid. But at last I said to myself, "You a soldier! Sit here, pitying yourself and crying. Dashed fool. Grin and bear it. There's hundreds worse." And so I went on all night. Sometimes I'd give way and do a weep, other times I'd bite my lips and try to be a man. And all the time I heard dogs yapping and yelling on the hills.

And once two or three pair of yellow eyes came glaring like sparks close to me, and I took up the rifle for a shot. But they sheered off. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stamp. At last day broke. My head ached till I was nearly blind, my arm was swelled and purple, like a German sausage. The bandages were tight and the flesh seemed red-hot. I let the bandages loose and climbed up on my feet. If I stayed there I'd die of lockjaw, I knew that. I kept snapping my teeth to feel if my jaws were stiffening, and I began wondering how long it took for mortification to set in. All the pluck had gone out of me. I was as dull as a frog. I staggered along a few yards and then flopped down in a faint. Soon as I came to I got up and potted along a little farther. Then down again in a faint. I don't know how many times I fainted, nor how far I got. But I had to give in, and I crawled under the shadow of a rock to die. It wouldn't be a long job, I felt sure, and I didn't care. Devil a care. In fact, I wanted to be dead and out of my pain, and I began to pray God to let me die. And all the while that dog munched away at my wrist and arm. And the sky looked like a hot plate, and I kept trying to wet my lips with a dry tongue, and dreaming or thinking about London, and the folks walking and talking in the streets, and the boys selling

papers about the war, and the fountains throwing up wet, white spray in Trafalgar Square. And then the hot plate of a sky came down, and I was dead.

I was dead, and gone to hell. There I stood at the bottom of a black cliff miles high, and the sky at the top like a star. And away behind me, a long way off, was fire and smoke and men groaning and women crying, and a long thin devil, like a wire-worm, with eyes like snapping sparks, and a big red beard waving about like flames, had me by the wrist with a pair of red-hot pinchers and was pulling and pulling, to drag me to the gridirons and the oven. *What a funk I was in! Never knew what real sick terror was before. And I gave a scream, and I woke up. Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Stamp. A native dhooly-wallah sat a few yards off me, on his hunkers, smoking, and a doctor knelt at my side doing up my arm.

"Ah," said he, "so you've come out of there. Just sit still, my fine fellow, while I mend your wrist. Steady. Sharp, Hammerton, the water."

They gave me water, and they laid me in the dhooly, and carried me to the field hospital. There I was put into a comfortable bed, and the doctor stopped the bulldog with an injection of morphia. Man, what a blessing that morphia is!

I slept six hours, and woke up cool and easy. To be sure, the doctor gave me beans once a day when he dressed the wounds, but the dog never gnawed again, and I was soon all right and back to duty.

If ever you see a hospital nurse in the street, salute her. I do. The way those plucky nurses work is a wonder. And *such* work. I saw things and heard things in that hospital—things that aren't good to tell. Things that made me do a weep, and shiver, and feel sick. And all the time those ladies keep as cheerful as a robin, and as clean as a star. There's two words no man can understand the meaning of until he's been wounded and in a field hospital. One is "doctor," and the other is "sister." Talk about Catholics praying to their saints. In a field hospital the wounded men get to worship the sisters. I have heard a man say it was worth while getting filled up with scraps of shrapnel only to see the sister's quiet face looking down at him. I can tell you, when I woke up eased of my pain I was nearly crying with delight at seeing a white English lady. God bless her. And when she gave me a Russian cigarette and lighted it for me, I put up a prayer. That's honest Injun.

But, of course, I was only "severely" wounded. God knows what it's like to be mauled and shat-

tered as some of our chaps were. I know I was more than satisfied with my little lot. I wouldn't do that march again for as many Distinguished Service Medals as would make a necklace for an elephant. No, give me ease, and never mind glory. London's good enough. Anybody may have the Tirah country for me. Sometimes I go and sit on the fountain rim in Trafalgar Square, and hear the fountains splash and watch the white spray, and I tell you it makes *good*!

Bilby. Call that getting a medal soft, do you? I should hate myself if I got one hard.

MICK O'MEARA'S DOG

THE STORY OF BOBBY CUTTS

PRIVATE CHALKER. Gammon of G Company and Pompey Duggles of K has been scrapping in the canteen and got run in.

Stumpit. What about?

Chalker. That's what I don't understand. They'd been chewing the rag about *monarchy* and *de-mockeracy*, and republics, an' that sort of tush, and at last they got wild. What the dickens *is de-mockeracy and monarchy?*

Pte. Slinn. What a hignoramus you are, Phil! Don't you know the difference between a bally republic an' a bally monarchy?

Chalker. No. What *is* the difference, Mr. Blood-an'-ouns?

Slinn. Why, it's like this. If I was a bally king, an' Billy Black was my bally army, an' you was my bally subject; an' if I hordered Billy to bash you over the boko, an' take your bally beer off you, an' put it in my bally can, that there would be *monarchy*. But if we was all three bally democrats, an' you was the bally people,

an' the Wee Mon was the bally army, an' I was the bally gover'ment; an' if me an' Billy decided a majority to raise taxes, an' I ordered Billy to block your bally 'at, and 'it you in the bally wind, and take your bally beer, and whack it out atween him and me, *that* would be a bally republic.

Chalker. But suppose as *hi* was the bally gover'ment?

Slinn. That there's impossible.

Chalker. What for?

Slinn. 'Cause I'm a bigger man than you, Phil Chalker, and I'd prop you on the bally proboscis fust.

Chalker. How many of you?—Blood-an'-ouns!

The Wee Mon. Lie doon, ye chatterin' fules, an' give us a rest.

Pte. Cutts. Let 'em alone, Billy. Let 'em barge. When I hear those two kids bluffing, it always puts me in mind of Micky O'Meara's dog.

Chalker. Who was Micky O'Meara, and what was the matter with his dog?

Cutts. Micky was an old Connaught Ranger, but had served in several corps. He was an Irish crackpot, and there's no crackpot any crackeder.

Father Peter. But a rale soldier.

Cutts. Real as a red herring: soldier all through.

Father Peter. A divvle's own limb for the dhrink.

Cutts. And the girls, Peter.

Father Peter. And the blarrney, Bob, me jool.

Cutts. Or the bayonet, by Jove.

Father Peter. Or letther-writin', be jabers.

Cutts. Oh! the letters. Mick's letter-writing was pie to the lads. The way of it was this, Chalker. Here was Mick, on home service, with a grey head, after three campaigns, plenty of wounds, and only two years off his pension, and as big a fool over lasses as when he first took the shilling. Talk about a girl in every port. Mick had a dearest girl for every day in the week, and two sweet darlings for Sundays.

Father Peter. An' he wrote to the whole iv him; ivery blessed gurrl.

Cutts. He did, Peter. And he always spoke his letters up aloud as he wrote them, and the boys used to sit on their cots and laugh at him.

Father Peter. How many n's in Annie?

Cutts. That's his form. Here he was at the table with a dictionary at his elbow, and this was the spin of it: "Me darlin' Annie (how manny n's in Annie?), 'tis the like iv a year since I left yez o' Choosday—no, bedad, 'tis too common: 'tis no language at all. Me darlin' Annie (shure there's two y's in ut), the time elapses (two il's an' two p's in ut)—elapses wid

such prolonged and dilatory procrastination (p, r, o, pro, wid a pro, k, r, a, s, h, wid a—where's the dictionary?) nation of tediousness." And here one of the lads would chip in like this: "R, ah, tay, rat, wid a rat; tay, ah, tay, tat, wid a tat; wid a rat-tat; tay, o, toe, wid a toe; wid a rat-tat-toe. Now I must go, so kiss me, Flo, for I love yez so, me darlin'." And then Mick would fire boots and things at the rascal, after which he'd go on with his letter in the same way.

Father Peter. He wis the grreat scholar, so he wis.

Cutts. He could do anything with a pen, bar writing. Why, when he was corporal he couldn't make out a p'rade state, nor a crime, and that reminds me of a trick was played him in Mullingar by a Cockney rascal named Basford, as we called Bloko. You see, Mick ran a fellow in, and Bloko offered to make out the crime. "Well," says Bloko, "what's the crime?" "Drunk and fighting in B passage and hesitating to obey an order," says Mick. So Bloko pretended to write it down, and when the fellow come up before the colonel in the morning and the adjutant read out the crime, it was, "Drunk and Irish in B passage, and refusing to fight his superior officer."

Andy White. And in Aldershot Mick reported himself absent. He was corporal at the time and acting orderly sergeant. Of course, he called the

roll on p'rade, and all the names he called were answered present, and yet he had only twenty-eight file one, and the slate showed twenty-nine file. You see, he was counted in the rank and file, and he'd forgotten that: and there was a blank file, which he couldn't account for. So when the sergeant-major took the report, Mick says, "One man absent, sir." "Name," says the sergeant-major. "I don't know his name, sir," says Mick. "Then double back and find out, you goat," says the major. Back goes Mick and calls the roll again. But all answered their names, and there was the blank file. "Come along," yells the sergeant-major, and poor Micky goes back to report that he couldn't find out who was absent. Well, the sergeant-major begins to swear, and threaten to put Mick on the shelf, when all at once Mick gives a buck-jump, and says he, "Be jabbers, I've got um." "Who is it, you mad hatter?" says the major. "Bedad," says Mick, "it's mesilf, sir!"

Cutts. And another time Mick was asked by the sergeant-major on church p'rade if he'd called the roll of his company. He'd called the roll of the church party, but had not time to call the roll of the Catholics, and he'd slipped the paper, with their names on it, into his shako. So he reports, "Church of England, all present, and the Roman Catholics in me hat, sorr!"

Andy White. He *should* have had the Victoria Cross, too.

Chalker. For reportin' hisself absent?

Cutts. No, my lad, but for a plucky bit o' work in the Ashantee War. Our chaps, mostly Houssas, with a few British officers and a handful o' riflemen, were retreating through thick woods before a big mob of blacks, when one of the officers went down wounded in the middle of a clearing. There was the officer out in the open, and the black devils firing at him and over him from behind the trees. Back goes Micky to fetch him in. The officer was hit badly in the head and was delirious. Mick got him on his back, but as he was stooping to lift him he was shot in the neck himself. Then he started for home with bullets, slugs, and scrap iron whistling round him, his own blood and the officer's running all over him, and the officer pulling Mick's hair out by the roots with both hands. However, he brought the officer in, and heard no more of him, not even whether he lived or died.

But about fifteen years later Mick—who'd been reduced to the ranks for about the tenth time on account of good John Barleycorn and Eve's daughters—was doing sentry-go on the main gate at Devonport when a civilian swell, with a set of army shoulders to him, came past his post. Mick stood to the shoulder to him, and the gentleman

asked where he got his Distinguished Service Medal from. Mick said he got it for fetching a wounded officer out of the fire in the Ashantee War.

"What?" says the gentleman. "What corps did the officer belong to?" and when Micky told him, "Why," says the gentleman, "I'm the officer you carried in, and you are the man that saved my life."

So they had a bit of a chow-chow together, and the officer asked Mick, if he was leaving the service so soon and with so small a pension, would he like a billet as a prison warder.

Mick said he would; and the officer told him he was one of Her Majesty's Inspectors of Prisons, and could find him a billet. "But," says he, "I hope you don't take any drink."

Mick owned up that he was now and again after kind of wetting his lips with it, and the officer pulled his moustache and said, "Haw" and "h'm" and "ha," and then says he, "they're very strict on that point, O'Meara, and if you got the worse for liquor only once they'd fire you out before you could close your heels."

"Well," says Mick, "in that case, sorr, I'd betther be seekin' a moister billet; and thank you kindly, sorr!"

But the officer claps him on the shoulder, and laughs, and says he, "No, my dear lad," says he,

"you carried me in a hotter place," says he, "and I'll carry you. And come to that," says he, and laughs again, "I'm cock o' the walk," says he, "and be George, as fast as they fire you out of one prison," he says, "I'll pitchfork you into another."

And he was as good as his word, I've no doubt, and Micky would keep him busy, for Mick was very Irish, and, bein' a soldier, was monstrous partial to change.

Pte. Stamp. And what's that to do with Micky's dog?

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Cutts. Oh, the dog.

There were two fellows in K Company that had dogs, and, like most doggy men, they were always lying and bragging about their poodles, until one day they got to lying and bragging one against the other.

Tom Bates had first go at it, boasting how his dog could settle rats, how he could run, what a lot he knew, and all about his breed and his points.

Then Ted Davis got hold of the gas-pipe and made his dog faster and cleverer, and of better family than Tom's.

Then Tom said, "Your *Spot's* a good dog, no doubt, Ted, and I dessay he could run a bit if my *Bingo* was after his tail."

"What?" says Ted, "your *Bingo* after my *Spot*? I'd like to see it. *Spot* would shake him like a rag."

"Don't make no mistake," says Tom; "*Spot's* a good bit o' dog-meat, but keep him away from *Bingo* if you don't want to lose him."

"Lose him," says Ted; "I don't quite catch your drift, Tommy, my lad."

"No?" says Tom, "but happen you are a poorish judge o' dogs."

"Of course, *of* course," says Ted, "there never were a Yorkshireman as didn't think he knew more about dogs than any other body. Why, i' Lancashire they'd not pick up such a dog as *Bingo* in the street."

"That's right enough," says Tom. "Lancashire folk cannot be expected to understand such things."

"Why," says Ted, "how should they, poor devils, when they weren't born i' Yorkshire? They can do nout i' Lancashire, though they can lick blazes out o' Yorkshire at football, or at cricket, or at wrastlin', and tha knows it."

"Do I?" says Tom. "I know very different. Did ta iver hear o' Jarge Ulyett?"

"I have that," says Ted, "and *he* has heerd tell o' Johnny Briggs."

"And Johnny Briggs has heerd tell o' Bobby Peel," says Tom, "and where's t' Lancashire

battin' ? Half o' t' team's tail. Our stumper can bat most o' their heads off."

"Your stumper's a bit t' mak o' your dog," says Ted. "What do yo' call Archie MacLaren ?"

"Nowt," says Tom, "where Brown and Jackson comes. He's a bit t' mak o' your *Spot*, more bark nor bite."

"Bite or no bite," says Ted, "*Spot* would worry *Bingo* like an old clog."

"Gerrout," says Tom, "if *Bingo* got at *Spot* he'd leave nowt but a litter scattered all over t' floor."

"Hasn't pluck for t' job," says Ted, getting red in the gills.

"What ?" Tom yells out, jumping up. "Says my dog's white-livered ! Tell thee what, Ted Taylor, tha'rt as bad a judge o' pluck as tha'rt a judge o' dogs."

"That's a lie," Ted sings out. "I can soon show thee pluck, if tha wants it."

"Art a' fit to do it ?" says Tom.

"Yes, and willin'," says Ted, "for thee an' thee dog an' all," and he goes close up to Tom, and Tom gives him a shove, and Ted gives Tom a smack, and just then the door opens and in comes Sergeant Micky O'Meara.

"Hullo !" says he,— "what's the row ? Stop that. Clear them tables away and off wid your

boots. Sherlock, you pick up Taylor; Pike, you pick up Bates. Now then. Three rounds and shake hands. Are you ready? Toime."

With that the two dog men fell to work, and milled each other a treat. They were a good match and fought hard, for they were fighting for the honour of their counties as well as of their dogs, and the rivalry between Yorkshire and Lancashire is as stiff and as tough as it ever was between Scot and Scot.

The first round was a stinger, and at the end of it Bates went down to a straight left. The second round was as hot, until Taylor was cross-buttocked and fell in a heap amongst the tea-bread, which had been put on one side out of the way. In the last round there was a red-hot rally, and the two clinched and rolled under a bed-cot.

Then we parted them, and Micky made them shake hands. Tom had two black eyes, and Ted had a nose like a mangel-wurzel, and one shutter up. They were both winded, and sat down to wipe their faces and blow.

Then Mick asked what the row was about, and I told him it was about their two dogs.

"Dogs, is ut?" says Mick. "Is it dogs yez do be callin' thim? Shure, 'twis daftness to foight for the loikes iv thim at all. Divvle the hair's the difference betwixt an' betwune thim."

"There is *not*, sergeant," says old Mike Delaney.

"Well, bhoys," says Micky in a fatherly way, "ye're afther enjoyin' an illigant foight, an' now be continted an' don't get foightin' no morre. D'ye moind? An' another matther. Take me advice an' don't allow neither iv yer dogs to come near the gymnasium, where I keeps my dog *Roarer*. For I doubt iv the like of thim dogs would agree wid *Roarer's* digestion. An' the divvle a care he'll care about that, but will just ate up the pair iv thim. For whin he see the chansh iv self-indulgence the divvle a thought he gives to his health, the baste. So be careful, bhoys, iv yer dogs. Keep thim up, for fear lest *Roarer* sees thim."

With that Sergeant Micky walked off, and if ever you saw a couple of Tommies look taken down, Tom and Ted looked so when they heard the sergeant bluff both their hands like that. And since then, whenever I hear a brace of braggers trying to bluff one another, I say it reminds me of Micky O'Meara's dog. And now I'm off for a quiet smoke, and then to sleep. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Bow, wow!*

MOTHERBOY

LANCE-CORPORAL NORRIS'S STORY

PRIVATE CHESSLES. Simple as Sid Stamp got *his* D.S.M., there's some got cheaper. What do you say, Happy Jock?

Lance-Corporal Amiel. Talking to me, Cheeky Chessles? Ask Norris if we got our medals easy.

Chessles. Needn't ask no one. It was a capture—a gift. How long was you out?

Amiel. Only nine months.

Chessles. Nine months! There you go. It was a pic-nic, a walk-over, a regular bloomin' capture. The easiest, snuggest capture the British army ever had.

Norris. Were *you* there, Cheeky?

Chessles. No. Just my bloomin' luck. Havin' fever at Malta—missed me tip. *What* a capture!

Amiel. You could have bought my share of the pic-nic for the price of an ounce of Irish roll.

Chessles. Oh, come. Dammit, come. Don't give it away. You get your fun, you get your field pay, you get your medal *and* new toggery,

and you get your extra furlough,—dammit, what *do* you want?

Norris. Want a rest.

Chessles. I tell you, it was a gift. Soudan campaign! Blessed tall campaign. That medal's a capture, and you ought to sing to it and play to it, and dance it on your knee. Come now, dammit, be reasonable.

Amiel. I call it nine months' hard labour.

Chessles. Oh! listen to the band. Work! You were carted up to the front in trains, be George; fed like fightin' cocks, dammit, and the enemy formed up solid, waitin' to be killed.

Norris. I'd sunstroke on the line of march, was wounded in the knee at the Atbara, and had enteric fever coming down.

Chessles. Well, you'd learn something. And it's worth so much to learn things.

Amiel. My oath! You do learn things. It's a good stiff school. It learns you to believe in the ten plagues of Egypt, and the hundred plagues of the Soudan. What with flies and fleas, and heat and sand, it's cruelty to animals. You may guess what the heat's like when the horses fall down dead with sunstroke. And they've hornets there as big as humming-birds, and with stings on 'em like assegais. And the skeeters! They're as wicked and as wakeful as the dervishes, and a sight harder to kill.

Bilby. Dervishes are good scrappers, ain't they ?

Amiel. Yes, they're big-boned, up-standing men, muscular and hairy, and they're as game as a pebble, and as wild as cats. They aren't afraid of anything, and have no mercy on anything. Fighting's what they like ; fighting and loot. They'll stand till the last man's killed, but they don't like being shot at long ranges. They think it's mean, and not war. Their ambition is to die on the bayonet. They enjoy slashing about with a knife or a spear at close quarters, but they're never happy till they feel the bayonet through 'em. It's their religion, you see.

Bilby. That's what Jock Forrester told me. He said, " Spit one of 'em on a lance, or give him a slap under the ear with a sword, and he'll yell out 'Quah,' and die happy ; but shove a bayonet right through his bloomin' chest, dammit, and he'll go to heaven swaggering with pride."

Amiel. Mad Cashman fought three of 'em, sword and spear against bayonet. He killed one, and two of them ran away. Cashman followed them up, wounded another, and then chased the third almost into his own camp.

Chessles. I shouldn't have thought Cashman was so game.

Norris. You never know a man till you see him

under fire. Look at old Motherboy, Jack. There was a take-down.

Chessles. Boots !

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Norris. There was a fellow in my company called Plunkett, was the most disappointing man I ever served with. Well, he was disappointing in a sense. He was a sort of unexpected, wouldn't-have-thought-it kind of chap. His real name was Plunkett, as I said, Charley Plunkett, but we called him Motherboy, and Mammyboy, because he was so fond of writing to his mother. And not only that, but he didn't smoke, and he didn't swear, and he didn't drink, and he never played cards nor backed horses; and he used to read poetry books and put scent on his handkerchief. He was what *we* called a sap, and we used to chaff him and spoof him all the ways we knew.

He *was* a sap, too. He was afraid of the sergeants, he was afraid of the cholera, and he was afraid of his wife; and besides, he had soft feet and couldn't march, and if you'd seen him hold a cricket bat or try to mount a horse you'd have died.

But he amused us. When we saw him blushing and trembling because the colour-sergeant spoke to him, we used to laugh; when his wife came out in the football field and ordered him off home, we used to roar; and the times we put

cayenne pepper in his nail-brush, rosin in his hair-brush, or bitter aloes on his tooth-brush are more than I could count. But he never said much about it. He was such a sap.

So I leave you to guess what sport we had with him on the line of march going up to Atbara. We knew we were in for it, and we took care that old Mammyboy didn't forget. Every man in the company had a try at him. Sometimes we talked about the Fuzzies, what big, tough, up-standing beggars they were. Sometimes we told about their swords cutting through bone and even through steel. Sometimes about the way they served the prisoners and the wounded. All to put the funk in poor Mammy. And Mammyboy would sit as still as a toad and listen, and sometimes he'd heave a sigh. It was great fun. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Norris. Well, one fine day we found ourselves moving out to take up positions for the Atbara attack. I don't mind owning up that I didn't feel happy myself. One of the old admirals said there were never but two men went under fire without a wince or a white thought, and one of those was Nelson, and the other was an idiot. I was neither, and I chewed a straw and said "nothing to nobody." It was my first brush, and I felt what you might call jellified. When we lay down in line I kept a close touch of

my left-hand man, and held my finger near the trigger. My throat was as dry as a fuzz ball, and my tummy seemed to think it was aboard ship. I very nearly prayed for the fun to begin, and every minute seemed like two hours' sentry-go.

While I was enjoying myself in this way, Rafferty, who was my right-hand man, whispered me to look at old Motherboy. When I looked round Mammy was lying flat on his stomach looking hard at the zareba we had to go for. His face was as red as his tunic, his lips were twitching, and the sweat was dropping off his eyebrows. His eyes were wide open, and looked like green fire.

"Did ye iver see a man wid such fear in the face o' him?" says Rafferty. "The creeter's nigh dead with the scares."

"Raff," says I, "he does look feared, but he looks fearsome. If the Fuzzies all look as feared as Mammyboy I shall be glad to see their backs." For there was something in Mammy's face that made my mouth water and the flesh of my back shiver.

Well, just as we were talking the black devils let fly a volley. It dropped short mostly, and flung up the sand in a cloud, and I heard the ricochet squeal over our heads.

I held my breath for a second, and then looked

about me. Rafferty was on his face, quite still. He had been shot clean through the brain. Another man a few files farther right was holding his arm with one hand, and cussing awfully, and one of our lieutenants was staggering about just behind the right section with his face bloody and one arm hanging limp.

I looked for old Mammyboy, and he had not stirred. I don't think he had winked. He lay just the same, with his eyes on the enemy and his hand on his rifle.

"Then the music began, a devil of a dance we had. Off we went to the zareba, the niggers firing as fast as they could load, and men going down right and left. It was hot while it lasted. But it was better than the waiting, and I felt more excited than anything else.

"As for Mammy, he was a caution. He turned back his cuffs, chucked away his helmet, fixed his bayonet, and went in smiling as if it had been a country dance. He never fired a shot till we were through the wattle fences and the wire snares, and then he went to work with the bayonet. He got well in ahead of me—no: I was not in a hurry—and I saw him pointing and parrying and dancing about in the very thick of the scrimmage. Soon after I was among it myself, and had no time to watch anybody but the Fuzzies, so I lost sight of Mammy till the row

was over and I was limping back with a slash in my foot, same that nearly cost me a leg.

As I was making my way along I saw old Motherboy sitting on a heap of deaders with his back against a dying horse. He was as white as a barrack-room plate, his left arm was bandaged above the elbow, and the collar and right breast of his tunic were soaked with blood.

"Hallo, Mammy dear," says I, "what's the damage? Look as if you'd got your share of anything that's been going."

"Jim, old chap," says he, "give me a drink; I'm a bit stale, but I'll be all right directly."

I gave him a drink, and helped him on to his feet, and he grinned quite cheerfully, but he looked badly. "Come," says I, "what's the trouble?"

"Nothing much," says Mammy; "I've got a bullet through my left arm, and another through my neck, and one of the beggars has sliced a piece out of the calf of my leg. But, I say, Jim, wasn't it *fun*?"

"Well," says I, "Mammy, we always thought it would be a jolly good lark to see you under fire, and it *was*."

"Grand," says Mammy,—“I never enjoyed myself so much since I had the measles,” and down he flopped in a dead faint.

He and I were cot mates in hospital afterwards,

and I found he was just as much of a sap as we thought him—when there was no fighting to be done. When there was fighting he was the greediest glutton I ever knew. I said to him one day, “Mammy,” says I, “you’re not Nelson, so you must be the other chap.” *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Norris. You see, fellows are so mixed. You never know what a man is till he’s tried. We’d all of us kidded him, and spoofed him, and bullied him for years, and he stood it like a sheep. But I wouldn’t have stood in his way at the Atbara for all the gold in the Bank of England cellars. And I’ll tell you another queer thing about him. I was telling of his conduct at the Atbara in the Saddler’s Arms, in the Mile-end Road, one night, and a chap there says, “Plunkett?—Why, I knew him before he ’listed. He was the prettiest boxer in Whitechapel. I once saw him fight two hours with a navvy twice his size, and the navvy had to be carried home on a coster’s barrow, and Plunkett never showed a mark.” That’s why I said he was a disappointing kind of chap.

Chessles. What became of him?

Norris. What became of him? Why, that’s like all the rest of it. He took his discharge, started a boot stall, took a shop, made money, opened other shops out in the suburbs, and is worth thousands of pounds to-day. He always

sends me a quid at Christmas. His wife died, and he's married the prettiest girl in London. He was a surprise-packet, Mammy was. But some chaps are lucky and other chaps lose their legs. Well, it's all in the twenty-one.

THE BLACK M.P.'S

SERGEANT PEEL'S STORY

LANCE - CORPORAL AMIEL. Bandy Goddard's clinked to-night.

Drummer Fidler. What for?

Amiel. Sober in barracks at tattoo.

Andy White. Who jugged him?

Amiel. Provost-sergeant.

Ryan. 'Tis dhirty soldierin', so 'tis, to chalk a man whin he's quiet in barricks. But the provost is the divvle's own cousin, and wud jug a lamb.

Amiel. He's a sweet lamb, Godder. But he was quiet enough: fast asleep in the middle of the parade at last post, and couldn't remember his own name.

Ryan. All the same, Sergeant Micher's a bad bob's-worth, an' crime delights um.

Sergeant Peel. Micher's not vicious; he's strict. You should have soldiered under his noble predecessor. Eh, Andy?

Andy. What, Bonass? Begow, he wor the very owd Scrat hissen. Tell 'em, sergeant, how yo' feuled him th' night yo' wor on picquet.

The Wee Mon. Boots !

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Sergeant. Bonass was the meanest thing that ever wore M.P. on its cuff, or stripes on its arm. There wasn't a man in the Ramchunders that didn't hate him like an adder ; and the sergeants hated him more bitterly than the men did. He gloried in his work. It was pipe and pot, dance and song, prize medal and Sunday girl to him. He would have sat up all night to get a good soldier three days' "pack." He would have gone without his dinner to see a lance-corporal's stripe cut off. The fellows used to say he bagged his trousers at the knees with praying to God to send more crime. To have given a man a chance would have cost him his own self-respect. When he gave a soldier the cell-crop he smacked his wicked old lips to every snip of the shears. He would have reported his own mother, or flogged his own son at the triangles, and it was said that the first thing he did after he got his lance stripe was to put his own father in the guard-room. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Sergeant. Bonass's favourite word was "clink," and he used to say it with a relish, as a good priest speaks the word "heaven." He always spoke with a nosey snuffle of enjoyment about any kind of punishment ; but he fairly sang

when he got a squad of poor prisoners at shot-drill. I believe he read the papers every day in hopes of a war, hoping he might have a chance to use the cat on service. When his brother-in-law, Sergeant Gibbings, was on the peg, Bonass went to him and grinned and gloated over him. He said he was sure of a court-martial, and had a beautiful chance of cells. "An' if you come to *me*, George," said Bonass, "duty's duty, an' I'll weigh your skilly fine, an' cut your hair as close as the shears 'll bite."

Gibbings got off, and we all congratulated him in the mess, for George was a good sort, but old Bonass stood winking his foxey eyes and wrinkling his knifey nose, and says he, "Well, it's a chalk, boys; it's a chalk. He's a day's march nearer 'ome."

The Wee Mon. What like of mon would he be?

Sergeant. As ugly as he was ignorant. We called him Dirty Dick because he didn't wash his ears, and Peeping Tom for his passion for peeping round corners. He'd a long thin nose, like the finger of a sundial, and little ferrety eyes, sunk deep in his head, and looking like glow-worms in a rat-hole. His skin was as yellow as a drum-head, but full of wrinkles and creases. He'd a hangman's face, and a gaoler's whiskers, and grew his reisty moustache half-way

down his neck. *I* never saw such a cruel, surly, hungry villain. He never laughed, but when he was pleased he would grin like a vicious cur, and whistle through his yellow tusks.

Andy White. The beggar had teeth like a garden rake.

Sergeant. Do you mind his walk, Andy? It was a quick, sneaky stride, and he went with his body bent forward and his Newgate face down, like a mangy wolf following a trail. And he *was* on somebody's track all the time his eyes were open. He'd helped to smash scores of non-coms. by false swearing, and would have said "drunk, sir," if the sergeant-major had called him to prove a pump.

Ryan. For the love o' God, did nobody do anny-thing to um?

Sergeant. Wait till I tell you. As bad as Bonass was, his bull-dogs were worthy of him. There were four of them. I'm speaking of the time we were at Newport, Mon. There were three of our men, and one of the Field Artillery. Oh, they were a pretty bunch of Peelers. *I* never met such military police. We called them the Black M.P.'s for their villainy.

There was Gammon, a small Snarleyow of a man, with three medals and four badges; there was O'Reilly, the Angel Gabriel as he was called, a tall, dour dog, who'd seen more service and done

more pack-drill than any man in the regiment; there was Sandy M'Bean, a pawky Scotsman, as dry as a kipper, who was always arguing about religion when sober, and quoting Burns when drunk; and there was a fat, burly gunner, with a round, smirking face that a good soldier couldn't see without wanting to smack it.

Ryan. The sight of thim must hev been a burrnin' timplation.

Sergeant. The men were simply ravenous for a chance at them. Well, those were the Black M.P.'s. All four of them would drink like cabmen, take bribes with both hands, and swear to any lie old Bonass told. Not a man of them but would have sold his twin brother for a chew of twist, or gone ten miles out of his way to do a friend an injury.

M'Bean was the greediest, Gammon the meanest, Gabriel the most vicious, and the baby-faced artilleryman the most cunning. They hated one another like scorpions, and feared Bonass like Satan, and Bonass despised and bullied them all, and made them his eyes, and his ears, and his teeth and claws. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. Every night Bonass posted a couple of his bull-dogs outside the canteen to snap up any poor soldier who was in liquor, or could be sworn to be. And many a time have I heard

him coaching the animals. He'd stand out in the dark, with his nose glued to the window, counting the men's drinks. He'd put one fellow on duty by the steps leading down to the square where the canteen stood, and he'd say, "Now, Gammon, you 'ang about 'ere hand look out for stragglers. D'ye 'ear? You needn't wait for 'em to come hout, if you can swear 'em drunk goin' hin."

Then he'd put another sneak by the window: "Gabriel, you watch this winder. See? Don't budge, nor wink a heye. Bill Wipples an' Mike Dorgan's good enough any minute. Directly either of 'em shows a nose 'e's for the *clink*. There's two M.P.'s be'ind the dust-bin waitin' for the office. Keep yer heye on Lanty Finnigan, 'e's in 'is third pot. Watch 'em, Gabriel,—watch 'em. We ought to land a baker's dozen before tattoo. D'ye mind. If one o' them beauties slips through yer fingers you'll have to listen to *me*." And the old wretch would slide off to the mess for a glass of ale.

Ryan. 'Tis a wonder nobody happened an accident to um—wid a bottle—tro' a windy.

Sergeant. Ha, Ryan, you should have done pack-drill under Dirty Dick. He talked to the defaulters as if they had been thieves. He never stopped dogging and worrying the men. This is about his style, all in a snuffling, snarly, sing-

song:—"Step longer, Snellin', an' more lively. Lef', right; lef', right! Quick time, you loafer, an' a full pace, or I'll find you sweet rest—in the *clink!* Lock up, Fogger an' Swinn, butts back, you're not slopin' forks in a hayfield. Lef' wheel. Quicker, Snellin'. Don't drag it, or I'll drag you off to the *clink!* Lef', right; lef', right; *I'll* fetch the foolishness out of yer, me darlin's. *Now*, then, Bibby, thumb be'ind the seam, and shet your hugly mouth. If ye're hout o' breath yer can 'ave a lie down—in the *clink!* Lock up, there; lock up, yer lazy tykes, or I'll lock yer hup for the night. Don't lose the touch, Mirrins, or you'll find the *clink!* Back with them butts, devilskins. Ri' turn, ri' turn, ri' turn, lef' turn, lef' turn, ri' turn, ferunt *turn!* Gord's love! Don't play at merry-go-round. By the right. If I catch yer boxin' the compass like that again, me beauties, I'll box the whole squad in the *clink!* *Wake* up, Snellin'. Think yer heverybody 'cos the colonel spoke to yer this mornin'? Keep yer right shoulder hup, man. If I ketches yer dodgin' them rough patches again, me buck, I'll dodge yer into the Soldier's Rest at the double, an' that's the *clink!*"

So the old beast would go on, marching and turning the poor devils in quick time for the full hour, and taking pains to manœuvre the squad over all the stony patches of the parade, which,

as you may imagine, was hard on the men and played the mischief with their—*Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. The barracks at Newport are a long way from town, and the road is hilly. One night a daft Welshman, Buffalo Adams, tried to slip the escort as he was being run in on a charge of drunk. There was a scuffle, and the Buffalo and one of the picquet got hurt.

Peeping Tom made this an excuse for persuading the colonel to make an order that any soldier arrested in town might be confined in the Town Hall for the night. The effect of this was to put the men at the mercy of Bonass and the Black M.P.'s, for a prisoner not being seen by the sergeant or corporal of the guard, there was no one to speak to his being drunk or sober except the civil police, who were at feud with the soldiers, and had most likely been squared by Bonass.

You can guess what happened. Bonass and his Black M.P.'s ran men in by the score every night, and put "drunk" against them all, and in a few weeks' time there was a squad of defaulters on the square like a double company, half a dozen lance-corporals had been reduced, and it fairly snowed good conduct badges.

It was a little reign of terror. Men began to be afraid to stay in town after retreat. Black-list men grew mutinous, and men of good character

who'd been punished on false evidence got slack at their soldiering. All the non-coms. were waxy about it, the old sergeants shrugging their shoulders and swearing, and the young ones calling councils of war in the mess, and laying plans of campaign against the Black M.P.'s and their precious leader. It was unbearable. Bonass grinned his dog's grin, and rubbed his hands with glee under our very noses, and the rascally Black M.P.'s swaggered and went large, and hunted the men like rabbits. Even the corporals were afraid of them. Something had to be done, and as it happened I had the luck to do it. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. It came like this. One night I was in charge of the picquet. It was Bonass's custom to go to the guard-room after tattoo parade and look over the tattoo reports. He knew that the good-natured sergeants would let absentees go to their beds even when they came in after midnight, and he would hang about until the clock struck twelve, when he would say, "Ah! twelve o'clock. Six men still absent. *That's* all right. You'll understand, sergeant, if any of these blaggards comes hin after this he's for the *clink!* See? Drunk or sober—the *clink!*" And he would go off down town to enjoy the pleasures of the chase.

Well, on this particular night he took me to

the guard-room with him while he looked over the reports. "Only six," said he, making a sour mouth; "'ardly worth waitin' for." Then he called the Angel Gabriel, and told him to wait till twelve, take the names of the men still absent, and report to Bonass in town. Then we marched off the picquet and went on patrol in Newport.

Bonass was in great spirits, for there was a lot of men on pass, and he meant to do business with them. But he had no luck, for the men had grown shy and would not show in the streets.

"We shall have to draw the badger," said Dirty Dick to me; "bring your picquet along in quick time, and we'll beat up the Canal Parade.

The Canal Parade was a disreputable street by the side of the canal, and had been put out of bounds. Any soldier caught there would be "for the *clink*."

The parade was a ragged cinder path between a row of evil-looking houses and the filthy water. It was ill-lighted and worse kept, and had such a gamey reputation that no decent man or woman would have liked to be found dead in it. The air was gritty and thick, and the smell of fried-fish, stagnant water, and rotting piles was wicked enough to poison a toad.

We marched half-way along this dingy rat-run, and halted opposite an inn known to the men as "the dust-hole." It was a rickety two-storey

house, built of wood. Over the door there was a swing sign on which was marked in chalk, "The Cocke and Botle: W. P. Smith." The timbers of the house had not smelt paint for years; there was a puddle round the doorsteps, and one of the windows was mended with a tea-tray. On the top step sat a starved cat, looking as if the moths had been at her, and in the doorway there loafed a man with both hands in his pockets, and a dirty clay pipe between his rusty teeth. He had a patched dungaree shirt on, and greasy moleskin trousers, and wore a broken old bowler hat cocked over one eye—the eye that had a green shade on it. He was an ugly brute, with a bullet-head, a ruined nose, three days' growth of blue beard on his face, and a mouth like a spade-cut in a turnip. His complexion, as Shakespeare says, was "perfect gallows." He scowled at us, but said nothing.

"Got any soldiers in 'ere?" said Bonass, speaking through his nose, and blinking his eyes very fast.

"No," said Bluebeard; "they's no sogers 'ere. I don't allow the likes o' them in this 'ouse."

"Gord's grace!" said Bonass, winking his eyes faster and snuffling like a wet dog. "*Hi* should think not. Oh no. It's a beastly respectable locality this. I've read about it in *The Times* an' *Hally Sloper*. Yus, *indeed*, Cock an' Bottle,

by W. P. Smith. It hought to be the Dook's Rest, by William Plantaginit Smythe, Esquire; licensed to be drunk on the premises!"

"You're a schollard," said the man with the black eye. Then he rolled his pipe round to the other side of his mouth and added, "But you're a hugly old freak."

Bonass went at it again. "'The Dook's Rest,'" he said, "or 'The Gentle Shepherd.' *Hi* know the kind of 'igh-toned palatial swipe-shop this is. 'Hotel Canal P'rade,' hunder the patronage o' the rial fam'ly. Dooks, hearls, and viscounts in the saloon bar, bishops in the snug, privy council, masters o' the buck'ounds an' ladies-in-waitin' in the back parlour, members o' Parliament an' landed gentry hupstairs."

Bluebeard took his pipe out of his mouth and said one word: "Blether." Bonass went at him again. "The Peer's Harms. Nobody hunder the rank of a nuisance inspector allowed in the smoke-room. Private hentrance for the dean an' chapter, curates served in their own jugs. Gord's grace, yus. No spittin' on the stairs, wines from the wood, no chalk, Sunday schools provided for; soldiers, colliers, pigs, policemen, an' members o' the Watch Committee not admitted. Saveloys an' huther delicacies in season, hevenin' dress at dinner, lodgin's for man and beast, French spoke 'ere."

The man at the door struck a match on his moleskins and said, "Gar on, measles. Call yourself a man. You're a fatal haccident."

Bonass tried to squint past him down the passage, but nothing came of it. "Are you W. P. Smith?" he asked.

"I'm the lan'lord," said Bluebeard.

"No," said Bonass,—“no. You bloomin' ain't. You're the bloomin' proprietor an' director, that's what *you* hare. You're a Sunday school superintendent, a halderman past the cheer, an' a Hoxford don in disguise.” Then he showed his teeth in a snarl. “Got hany poisoned or houcussed soldiers inside? This dirty lush tub's hout o' bounds. D'y' 'ear, dog-face? Hour colonel'll give any man cells as disgraces 'is ridgement by allowin' of 'is uniform to be seen hanywhere in the precincts of your haristocratic neighbourhood. My Gord, yus.” Then he said to me, “March off the picquet, sergeant. The men'll be worried with fleas if they stop 'ere,” and off went Dirty Dick, full speed ahead before Bluebeard could get a gun to bear. I suppose after we had gone Bluebeard would kick the moth-eaten cat with his heavy—*Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. Whether it was the Canal Parade atmosphere or not, I didn't know, but half an hour later Bonass was taken ill, and though he

tried hot rum neat, with cayenne in it, he was obliged to strike his flag and go home.

It hurt his feelings sore, and he leaned out of the cab window and gave me precise instructions. "Stop every man yer meets, an' if one o' the blaggards has as much as half a drop in his eye—the *clink!* D'ye mind?—the *clink!* An' if yer meets hany o' the habsentees, drunk or sober; the *clink!* An' hany feller late off pass; the *clink!* An' d'ye 'ear? 'Unt the town, sieve it, rake it, riddle it. Gabriel can show yer the runs; nab 'em, nab 'em, gather 'em in. An' when yer comes back to barracks report to *me*. Mind, I shall wait for yer. O lor', I'm pizoned! O Grace o' Gord, I'm bad. Well, do yer best. I shall wait up for yer."

When the old thief was gone I marched the picquet into a side street, and took the corporal into a quiet corner to talk to him. It was Corporal Hulls, Happy Jack, a jolly fellow, and up to snuff. "Jack," said I, "duty's duty."

"Gospel, be George," says Jack.

"And," said I, "we must do our duty, corporal, no matter how painful to us it may be."

"We must, sergeant," said he, with a twinkle in his eye.

"Our duty, corporal," said I, "is to arrest all soldiers who are absent—or drunk."

"Ay, ay, sergeant," said Jack.

"Even," said I, "if it should be our own father, corporal—the *clink!* or if it should be a man on duty, even one of the picquet or one of the Military Police—the *clink!*"

Happy Jack grinned, and nodded his head.

"Of course," said I, "I don't expect any man of our regiment, or of the artillery, to forget himself on duty. But *our* duty is to hunt the town, corporal, and I mean to hunt it."

Jack looked up at the sky, and said, "Bully."

"Sergeant Bonass," said I, "is ill, and has entrusted me with this duty, corporal, and I mean to *do* it. If there is a man in town who ought to be in the clink"—

"There's more than one, sergeant," said Happy Jack.

"I'll have him, corporal," said I, "if I have to stay out till *réveille*."

Happy Jack and I looked at each other. Jack winked. "The regiment," said I, "expect it of us, and so does the provost-sergeant. We will deserve their confidence."

Jack slapped his chest, and hitched up his side-arms. "My bloomin' oath," said he.

We marched the picquet off, and proceeded to patrol the back streets and shy neighbourhoods of the town. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. In less than a quarter of an hour

we spied the Angel Gabriel coming out of a low beer shop by the back way. He looked rather taken when he saw us, but came up as bold as brass and said, "None of our men is there, sergeant."

I halted the picquet. "Private O'Reilly," said I, in a very regimental tone, "what were *you* doing in there?"

"I was looking for absintees, sergeant," said the Angel.

"You've been drinking," said I. "Corporal Hulls, look at this man."

"Be hevins, sergeant," said the Angel, "I've not moistened a lip to-night."

"Come, come, come," said Happy Jack, "don't give yourself away, man. Here, two of the picquet, take hold of his arms or he'll be down in a minute. He can hardly stand."

Poor Gabriel looked dazed. But we gave him no chance to talk. The picquet closed in on him, and we marched him off to the Town Hall. Directly he got into the police office Gabriel appealed to the constables, and their sergeant had the cheek to tell me the man seemed sober. "All right, sergeant," said I, "form your own opinion. I've arrested him as drunk on duty. Lock him up," and I marched off the escort without another word.

Andy White. It's Bible truth. I wor theer.

Sergeant. The Angel was jugged about half-past twelve, and before one o'clock we had run down Sandy M'Bean. Sandy was in an advanced state of wisdom, and was arguing about predestination with a canal-boat man and his wife when Happy Jack and two file of the picquet came round the corner and caught him. He steadied himself at sight of the picquet and asked the corporal with much dignity what he was doing there. Just as he was speaking I came round the other corner with the rest of the men.

"I've just been listening to you," said Jack. "Man, you're a fine debater, and I agree with your doctrine."

"What do ye mean?" asked Sandy.

"Just this," said Jack, "predestination's a true bill, and you're predestined to go to the *clink*!"

"What for, corporal?" said Sandy. Jack looked at me. "Corporal Hulls," said I, "take this man's belt off and march him to the Town Hall." Sandy was marched off, arguing all the way, and I took the remainder of the picquet back into Shantytown to stalk the other couple of Black M.P.'s. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. We were moving in slow time down a muddy lane when we saw a light shining from an open door, and heard singing. As we got nearer a woman looked out, and seeing us, drew

back in a suspicious manner and shut the door with a slam.

I halted the picquet outside the house, and Andy White climbed on to the window-sill and listened. He heard whispering, and thought he recognised Gammon's voice, but could not distinguish the words.

I knocked at the door, and a woman's voice asked, "Who's there?"

"Sergeant of the picquet," said I.

"What do you want?"

"I want to speak to one of the Military Police."

"There's no such person here."

"Yes, there is," Andy roars from the window-sill, "I've seen him. Do yo' hear, Gammon?" Now, Andy hadn't seen him, but the chance shot told, and Gammon came out. He tried to look unconscious; but it was a case of misplaced confidence.

"Am I a prisoner, sergeant?" he asked in a sucking-dove tone when we took his belt off. All the answer he got was, "By the right, quick march," and off we went.

The woman walked beside us and tried to put the comether on me. "Oh, sergeant," she said, "don't arrest him, sergeant. He hasn't been in my house one minute. Only just dropped in friendly, sergeant. Ah, now, you'll not take him, sergeant, I know. Yur've too good a face to be

nasty. Yur'll let him go, sergeant, there's a dear."

"Madam," said I, "duty must be done. Good-night."

Then the lady stopped and expressed her real opinion of me, in what Mad Cashman used to call "a style of metaphorical anathema," and, as the poet says, "the sky turned blue for miles."

But we stowed our good Gammon in the jug, allee samee, and then we divided the picquet into sections to hunt for the round-faced gunner. We hunted for half an hour without even finding his trail. We never should have caught him without Andy White.

Andy. Says I to myself, "When he misses his pals, what'll he do? He'll go to the Town Hall." So I gives the sergeant the tip to ambush the picquet up an entry opposite the Town Hall gate and wait for him. When we sees him comin' Jock Rochfort takes off his side-arms and goes off towards him in the middle of the road, walkin' a bit groggy. Soon as the Black M.P. sees Rochy, Rochy pretends to see him. Round swings Jock and runs. The gunner thinks he's an absentee and gives chase. Jock bolts into the dark archway and through the picquet, and the gunner comes tumblin' slap into our arms.

"Here, me lad," says the sergeant; "what do

you mean by charging into th' picquet i' this road? Who the 'l arta?"

"Beg pardon, sergeant," says the gunner, "I'm Gunner Whishaw. Have yo' seen M'Bean or O'Reilly?"

"Yo'll find 'em where yo're goin'," says the sergeant. "Corporal Hulls," he says, "take him away."

"As God is me Judge, sergeant," says th' gunner—but Happy Jack cuts him short,—“As God is your Judge,” says he, “you’re for the *clink*! It is a nice thing,” says Jack, “as Sergeant Bonass cannot be off duty one night, but yo’ chaps mun all get on t’ beer. Shameful,” he says,—“fall in,” he says, and off went Wishaw, t’ last o’ th’ Black M.P.’s, to the clink. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. Directly we had done our duty we set off for barracks at the quick-step, the men singing, “A Bunch o’ Peelers went out one day, on duty and patrolling, O!” and Happy Jack beating time with the prisoner’s belts, until we came near the gates, when we marched to attention and looked as solemn as the firing party at a funeral.

Bonass was waiting for us. He jumped up when I went into the guard-room, and asked, “Well; land any?"

I said, "Yes."

"Well, well," said Bonass, "'ow many?"

"Four," said I.

"Honly four? Why, there's eight habsentees. I'd 'ave nabbed the lot if I 'adn't been blooming sick. But, o' course, you don't know the ropes. Are they in the *clink*?"

"They are," said I.

Bonass produced a book and pencil. "Drunk?" said he.

"Yes," said I.

"Names?" said he, and I looked as wooden as a figure-head, and gave out the detail.

"Private William O'Reilly, H Co., Military Police, drunk on duty."

Bonass put his pencil down and winked his eyes like a heliograph. Teddy Mayes, who was Sergeant of the Guard, looked up and winked at me.

"Go on," said Bonass, and I went on:—"Private G. H. Gammon, C Co., Military Police; and Private A. M'Bean, D Co., Military Police, both drunk on duty."

Bonass screwed his features into a bundle of knots and said, "Gord's grace!"

Teddy Mayes went out to smile, and Jack Hulls came in to light his pipe at the candle. He looked as calm as a Quaker.

"Hah!" said Bonass, "that three. 'Oo's the

hother? eh, eh, eh? Grace o' Gord, 'oo's the hother?"

You could have heard a tear drop. Every man on the guard held his breath. Teddy Mayes lifted his eyes to heaven and put up a silent prayer. Looking Bonass in the face, and speaking very softly and slowly, I said—*Boots!*

CHORUS. Go on, go on.

Sergeant. I said, "Gunner—James—Edward Wishaw—B Battery—X Brigade—Royal Artillery—Military Police—drunk—on duty."

There was a long, slow, dry silence. Teddy Mayes stuffed his fist in his mouth and went round the corner. Then Bonass said, "So the eight absentees hare still at large?"

"Yes," said I,—“you were sick, the Military Police were drunk, and *I don't know the ropes.*”

"You may dismiss the picquet, Sergeant Peel," said Bonass. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. There was great excitement when the case came to orderly room. Half the regiment was out discussing the prospects, and there was a good deal of betting in the sergeants' mess.

Outside the orderly room the black M.P.'s stood in a row between the escort, and opposite, looking very wooden and sulky, were four bobbies and a sergeant bobby, who had come to swear them clear.

This was a move of Dirty Dick's and a foolish one, for there was bad blood between the civil police and the soldiers, and though our sergeant-major, who had great influence with the officers, would have taken Dirty Dick's part against me, he was almost certain to take my part against the civil power. Indeed, I had an inkling of this beforehand, for the sergeant-major called me to him on parade and said, "About these M.P.'s, Sergeant Peel; you arrested them yourself, didn't you?"

"Yes, sir."

"And they were drunk?"

"Yes, sir."

The major swelled his chest and stood on his toes. "Of course, they were drunk," said he. "If my sergeants say a man's drunk, he *is* drunk. Damme, he *must* be drunk."

I said, "Yes, sir."

"Of course," said the major, "these civil bobbies know nothing about it. *They* don't call a man drunk if he can lie down without holding on. Besides, they are such liars. Damn all liars. But lies won't serve them here. Lies may go down with a butter-brained magistrate, but they won't go down with *me*," and the major swaggered off, nodding his head and flourishing his cane.
Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. All the black M.P.'s were marched in together. The colonel shut one eye, and looked them grimly over with the other. When the colonel did that it was a bad sign for the prisoner. He was a good colonel, and could see more with one eye than most men can see with two.

Larry Dolan. He wis a foine colonel ; best in the service. He wanst let me off for a foive days' absince ; and tould me I'd die in a ditch whin I hadn't the guarrud-room to sleep in.

Sergeant. The colonel eyed the bunch o' peelers over, the adjutant stood by the table jingling his spurs and chewing his light moustache, the sergeant-major stood up straight and stiff, and looked as if it was no affair of his, and he hadn't the least idea of making it hot for the prisoners. As for the Black M.P.'s, they looked as miserable and rascally a bunch of wrong un's as ever got found out.

I gave evidence first, then Happy Jack ; then the colonel asked the prisoners tartly, "What have you got to say?" And the Black Imps denied that they were drunk.

"There is rebutting evidence, sir," said the adjutant, with a scornful glance at the bobbies outside. "Haw! civil police, sir."

The sergeant-major looked more wooden than ever, and the colonel turned to the adjutant with

a dry smile. The bobbies came clumping in, their sergeant saluting like a recruit, and the colonel said, "H'm ; were these four men drunk, sergeant?"

"Certingly *not*, sir," said the sergeant.

Then the constables said what the sergeant said; then the captains of the prisoners' companies and the lieutenant of artillery claimed the benefit of the doubt. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. After that the colonel looked at the adjutant, and the adjutant ordered the civil police out of the room, and marched in all the men of the picquet. You can guess what *they* said. They said it like one man.

Andy. We did, and I telled t' colonel as Gabriel had to be held up, and t' gunner wor charging about t' streets like a Sepoy run amok.

Sergeant. At last the colonel asked the sergeant-major for his opinion, and then we felt it was all right.

"Of course they were drunk, sir," he said,— "civil evidence is no use in military affairs, sir. The sergeant saw them, the corporal saw them, and their own comrades of the picquet are unanimous, sir. The men *must* have been drunk, sir. The provost-sergeant was sick, and the men took advantage of his absence, sir."

The colonel and the adjutant swapped smiles. Then the colonel frowned, bit his pen, and asked

the Black M.P.'s if they wanted to be tried by court-martial. They didn't.

"Ten days' C.B. and returned to duty," said the colonel,—“and think yourself lucky to get off so cheap.”

"R-r-right turrna!" screamed the sergeant-major. "Quick march!" and we all filed out.
Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergeant. Well, when the imps slunk off to their quarters they got a great reception. Nearly all the men off duty turned out to smile as they went past, and the drummer boys, who'd been left alone in the drum-room, threw their windows wide and fell to practising the "Rogue's March." It was a great victory, and ought to have been inscribed on the colours.

Andy. And the best of it wor, as four of the steadiest and most respectable men in the regiment wor appointed M.P.'s, and their names wor Conkey Doolan, Father Peter, Jock Rochfort, and Mr. Andrew White.

CHORUS. Oh! what a surprise!

Sergeant. Doolan had the longest life. He was returned to duty in three weeks, with ten shillings fine and fourteen days' C.B. to his credit.

Andy. But it wor a great day. Shall I ever forget Bonass when the Angel Gabriel wor late fallin' in for his hour's pack!

"Double up, there, O'Reilly," says Peepin' Tom, "double up, man; there's a lot o' nice new stones to dance down," says he,— "and 'ere's Gammon and M'Bean in the devil's own hurry to start," says he; "why, you're not half dressed now," says he; "your coat's folded like a tinker's bundle," says he; "turn out like that again," says he, "and you turn *in* sharp," says he, "to the *clink*!" and with that he fixed 'em and shouldered 'em, and give 'em the devil's hornpipe over the stony places, while all the fellers looked on from their windows and enjoyed it.

Sergeant. That was the fall of the Black M.P.'s, and the best service I ever did. When I went to the mess that evening Bonass came up to me and asked me to have a drink. I had it. As we touched glasses he wrinkled his face up into a wicked grin and said—

"You bragged well on that hand, Sergeant Peel."

"Yes," said I,— "you see, Bonass, I held four knaves." *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Good business.*

Ryan. And were they drunk, sergeant?

Sergeant. Well; they were very seldom sober — not regimentally sober. Besides, as the sergeant-major said, when one of his sergeants said a man was drunk, of course he *was* drunk, without a doubt.

DEAR LADY DISDAIN

PENSIONER SERGEANT WREN'S STORY

SERGT. PEEL. By the way, Wren, as you are lodging in our hotel to-night you might spin us a cuffer.

Sergt. Wren. No cuffers for me, Bob, old dog. Like my sleeps.

Ryan. The laws iv hospitality must be respicted, sergeant. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Wren. No, boys ; no. I never took no stock in cuffers. All I could tell you would be things that have happened to me : and they are just such things as happen to all other men.

Sergt. Peel. Listen to the philosopher. Listen to Sergeant Socrates. Come, Wren, old fellow, tell the boys how you bought cigars in the West End. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Wren. Oh yes ! Well, lads, in my time there was still a foolish prejudice against soldiers, and many a snub we had to take in public places, and precious little we liked them, I can tell you. But

now the times are mended, although in a nation of snobs, as England is, snobbery dies hard.

The cigar-shop affair was a case in point, and it provided me and my wife with what the chap in Shakespeare calls "sport for a day, laughter for a week, and a good jest for ever." It was a long time ago. Never mind how long: I'm more than out of my teens. I was doing duty as register-keeper at Wimbledon Camp, and happened to be up in London on a spree with a dear old pal of mine, Dicky Rolls of ours: ours being the Death or Glory Boys.

Dick was a smart fellow, handsome, good-humoured, and clever, though you might have mistaken him for a daffodil, he looked so uncommonly sweet and innocent.

Well, Dick had a fancy for a cigar, and we turned into a cigar-shop in the West End. There was a proud, pretty girl behind the counter, dressed like a princess, and when we went in she was flirting with a washed-out swell, all eyeglass and riding breeches.

Dick stepped forward and said very civilly, "Can you oblige us with two fourpenny cigars, miss, please?"

The girl glanced scornfully at us out of the cool of her blue eye, but made no answer.

Dick waited a minute, and then asked again.

The girl turned her shoulder to him, and said curtly, "We don't keep them."

Dick smiled sweetly, and, looking at her with wide, soft eyes as mild as a baby, said, "Sixpenny ones, please, miss."

The swell giggled. The girl said in a short, sour way, "We do not keep them."

Dick smiled, swelled his chest, curled his moustaches, tapped his leg with his riding-whip, and said, as calm as a Quaker, "I beg your pardon, miss. I will take six penny ones."

This time the girl turned her back on him and went on talking to the swell. Dick stood a little while as if he expected to be served. But as nothing came of it, he stepped up to the counter, looked the swell up and down, bowed to the girl, and saying, "I beg your pardon, miss: I am sorry to have given you so much trouble," turned to the right-about and walked out of the shop.

When we were in the street he said, "Come on, Jack; they won't serve us because we are soldiers. We'll get a smoke at a less aristocratic snuff-shop, and to-morrow we will find that beautiful vixen something to curl her pretty nose for."

So we did. You know, of course, that there were hundreds of soldiers of all arms, not to speak of volunteers and bluejackets, at Wimbledon Camp. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Wren. "Well, about eight the next evening the game began. Two privates of the Rifle Brigade opened the attack. They went tramping into the cigar-shop as bold as brass and asked my Lady Disdain for "two penny smokes."

"Did not keep them? They *were* surprised. Had she any twopenny ones?—No? Then they would have a fourpenny one between them. What?—No fourpenny ones? They were *so* sorry. *Could* she direct them to a cigar-shop where they *did* sell cigars?—No? Thanks awfully." And they strode out.

They were passed on the doorstep by a big corporal of the Royal Irish Dragoons. "He'd be afther takin' a shmoke: money no object. Shure, he'd go as high as three pence if needs be. Not got anny? Shure, it was the batin' of Bannagher, so 't was, and he'd be makin' bowld to throuble her for a box of matches."

He got no matches, at which he looked tremendously surprised, but bowed and walked out with no further words. And as he left in stamped four brawny kilted giants of the Black Watch, who demanded cigars in broad Scotch, and retired firing off guttural "hechs" of amazement on learning that cigars were not.

Close on their heels came a man-o'-war's man, who grinned like a Cheshire cat, and asked for thick twist; and then followed a stream of infantry,

horse artillery, marines, sailors, and volunteers, who wanted every kind of thing that a Christian could smoke, and expressed the greatest astonishment when informed that they could not be served. But no matter how cutting or scornful the girl in the shop was to them, they one and all behaved to her with the most perfect politeness.

This continued for an hour or more, until my Lady Disdain got as angry as a burnt finger, and at last, when old Sergeant Hoskins, of the Pompadours, went in and asked for two long clays and a screw, she shook her curls like wheat in a storm, and ordered him to leave her shop instantly, as they did not serve soldiers.

Hoskins saw that things were coming to a crisis, and he resolved to make the most of his chance. So he decided to sham deafness, and, catching at the words "do not serve soldiers," said he, "Eh?—a soldier? Of course, I'm a soldier, my dear, did you take me for a policeman?"

"You are impertinent," said the girl, flashing out at him like a tulwar,—"*how dare* you call me a dear?"

"Dear?" said old Hoskins. "Oh! I daresay, most things are dear in London. But never mind that, miss, give me two long clays and a screw. Damn the expense!"

"Leave the shop, you ruffian," screamed the girl, "before I give you in charge."

Hoskins nodded, and smiled. "Of course, my dear," said he, "I'll give you what you charge; but I wish you'd give me two long clays and a screw, for I'm in a hurry!"

Well, the girl was at her wits' end, and, not knowing what to say or do, she bounced out of the shop into the little snug behind, and banged the door with a vim.

Hoskins nodded, drew up a stool, and sat down. The girl remained in ambush behind her door, peeping through the blind, and expecting him to go. But the sergeant took out a short black clay pipe, cut some Irish roll on the counter, helped himself to a match, and began to smoke.

While he smoked, soldiers, sailors, and volunteers kept arriving. To every one that crowded into the shop Hoskins said: "Mark time a bit, chum; the young gel's gone into her nest to find me two long clays and a screw. She'll be back in the twinkling of a bedpost. Mark time. She's a most obliging gel, and I'm afraid I've given her a lot of trouble. But, bless you, these pretty gels doats on us soldiers, and thinks nothing's too much to do for us. Mark time, lads, she'll be here in a moment." And so the old rascal went on until the shop was packed tight with men in red, and blue, and black, and tartan, and the door was blocked by a crowd of civilians who wondered what was going forrard.

Then: Whish! Open burst the parlour door, and out bounced the young girl, looking like Lady Macbeth on a washing day. "Get out of my shop," she shrieked, "or I'll send for the police. Be off, you ruffians. Go!"

The boys stood fast, and old Hoskins rose up off his stool and looked as sorrowful as the best man at a wedding.

"Dear, dear, dear," says old Hoskins, "how stupid of me not to see it. What a pity, what a pity! And such a young gel, too, and so sweet and obliging. March, lads, march. I understand it now. *They've got the bum-bailiffs in*; come, step it." And with that all the fellows stalked out, looking sad, old Hoskins bringing up the rear, and saying in a loud voice: "Poor thing, poor gel, I *am* sorry. So young, so good-looking, so fond of soldiers. How sad."

That night dear Lady Disdain had no more army customers; but the next night, about eight o'clock, in walks Dicky Rolls, smiling and polite, and says he, "I *beg* your pardon, lady, but may I trouble you for a fourpenny cigar?"

And he *got* it, and a taper to light it with, and a very sweet and gracious "Thank you, sir"; and a smile for his smile, and a bow for his bow as he went away. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Sergt. Peel. Your chum taught her a lesson, Wren.

Wren. Yes. He was a smart fellow, Dicky. But women are kittle cattle, and proud as Dick was of his victory, the girl got even with him.

Corpl. Norris. In what way, sergeant?

Wren. In what way? Why, in a woman's way. She *married* him.

The Wee Mon. Boots!

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Wren. Halloo! Baby. So you scent romance, eh? Isn't it a caution—the greediness all kinds of men have for love-stories? And yet they are the silliest stories told, to my thinking, and the nearer they are to real life the sillier.

Sergt. Peel. You're a cynic, Wren.

Wren. Cynic? Not at all, only sensible. You'll not deny—for nobody *can* deny—that when a man's in love he's more or less off his dot and below his form. He's sick, soft, and selfish, and a good deal of a nuisance to his friends. He sees the whole world like a show and a surprise, as a boy does when he puts his head between his legs and looks at the trees and the sky topsy-turvy. And how can tales about the silly philanderings of silly lovers be anything but silly tales?

Sergt. Peel. They are sometimes amusing.

Wren. Oh yes. They may be good to laugh

at. That's true enough, if you look at it in that way. But it's when a parcel of grown men of the world, who should know better, take love and lovers seriously, deceive themselves with romance, and turn dry facts and blank foolishness into pretty lies, which they kid themselves into believing, that I get the needle. Hang romance, I say. Let us know ourselves, and show ourselves.

Ryan. 'Tis like whisky : bad physic, but pleasant taking, sergeant.

Wren. Pleasant ! I never could see that any kind of gammon was pleasant. Suppose a mess of Tommies were to sit round the barrack-room table after dinner, and kid each other they'd been having turtle soup and champagne, when they knew there was nothing better than coarse beef and swipes, what should we think of them ? Yet those same soldiers will lie about their girls, and listen to other fellows' lies about their girls, and the bigger the lie the better they enjoy it. As if earth were heaven and women fairies, and hunger could be satisfied with a feast o' waking dreams.

Sergt. Peel. Why, Wren, old chap, you're a hard-roed materialist.

Wren. That means, I speak the naked truth without any trimmings. For I know, and you know, that roast pig isn't venison, and that Eve's flesh isn't warm angel. And see what harm comes of pretending. All the miserable marriages I've

known have been "love matches." Kidding yourself that a woman's a saint before you marry her is as daft a trick as kidding yourself she's a woman of fortune when she hasn't the price of a leg of mutton to her name. It causes trouble after marriage. That's why there are millions of perfect sweethearts and only thin dozens of passable wives. It's romance that spoils the game, and I say, romance be damned.

Corpl. Goodchild. Did you never dabble in such merchandise yourself, sergeant?

Wren. Never. Catch me romancing and dreaming and filling a woman's ears with musical lies.

The Wee Mon. Then we may take it ye're no married, sergeant?

Wren. No? I've a good wife, though, and a good home, and six fine kiddies, too, and they are not fed on dreams. Neither was my wife bought with blarney. No. When I met my wife first I said to myself, "Polly, you'll do. You're plump and comfortable, sweet-tempered and handy. You've just got enough vanity to keep you pleased with yourself, and just enough sense to value a good husband." So I told her she was a fine girl, and I asked her to marry me. And what do you think she said?

Andy White. Boots!

Wren. Says she, "Corporal, you've spoken like a man, and I'll answer you like a woman.

When you have three stripes on your arm," says she, "we shall know each other better, and then, if you care to ask me again, you shall have yes or no kindly. I'm in no hurry myself," she says, "though it is nice to think that you are." Which I thought was a very neat way of letting me know I had been over-confident. Ha! She's got sense under her curls, has Polly.

Well, I got the other stripe, and I asked again, and she married me. Best bargain I ever made. But then, we never fooled each other with romance. I knew Polly was a woman, and I treated her womanly. She knew I was a man, and she made allowances. I married her twenty-five years ago, and we have never had a quarrel.

Sergt. Peel. Well, "hardly ever."

Wren. No, never. We always insist on proper respect, and pay it. Once, a couple of years after we were married, I came home to quarters and found the wife with her hair untidy and a crumpled collar on. "Polly," said I, "did you ever see me go on commanding officer's parade unshaven or with dirty belts?" "Never," said she. "Well, dear girl," said I, "and neither do I like you to meet me otherwise than trim and smart. For," said I, "I'm commanding officer here, and this room is my grand parade." And then she smiled and gave me a kiss, and said, "All right, dear," and she never forgot again to pay me the

respect of dressing and looking her very best. Another time I got tight and lost my stripes. Did she scold? Not at all. She came and put a soft hand on my shoulder, and says she, "Willie, you have been a foolish boy and thrown away your stripes. Now, pull yourself together, and get them back again; for," says she, "I know you'll be too proud to have your wife looked down on by corporals' women." That's all she said, and I got the stripes back in a year, got the canteen and made money. That's what I call sense. No romance about it. And now my wife's six-and-forty, and as pretty as a picture. Plump, rosy, and cheerful, with as much modesty and as smart in her dress as the day I married her. Feeds me well, speaks me fair, and stands by me plucky and smiling, in sunshine and in shower.

Sergt. Peel. It's a treat to see a man in love with his own wife.

Wren. In love? Never was in love in my life. But Polly is a good wife, and a bonny woman, and the best pal I ever had. I wouldn't have missed her for worlds. No; damn romance, I say. Give me common sense, plain facts, and a comfortable married life. Polly weighed nine stone when I married her, and she's full ten stone now. She never was a penny novelette girl, nor a bit like the dream-woman of a poet. Nice bounder I should have been to take home a

dream-woman to live with me in barracks on a sergeant's pay. No, no; give me a solid English lass, that can turn a pancake and save a shilling, understands canteen tobacco and human nature, and doesn't expect to give with one hand and take with two. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Wren. Well, Dicky Rolls, though a clever fellow, was no judge of women. The girl at the tobacco shop, whose name, I may tell you, was Barbara Fern, was very pretty, though more slim and dainty than I should choose, and could talk like a lady, and dress like a lady, and be as sweet and fine as a tea-rose in a silver vase. She was three-and-twenty when we first met her, and willing to be married. She liked Dick's style, for he was well-spoken, and one of the best-looking fellows in a good-looking corps, and she knew, as most women know by instinct, that a pretty girl with *nous* to play her cards can marry almost any man she chooses.

So, with all his smartness, poor Dick never had an outside chance. The girl began clever as a monkey. First she apologises very prettily, looking down on the counter and speaking like a song, and then she looks up to be forgiven, and blushes and looks down again. And then Dick asks her to forgive him, and begs her to give him a flower she is wearing as a sign that she isn't angry, and

all the usual romantic tomfoolery ; and the next day he tells me she's a devilish nice girl, and that our little joke was a very poor sort of a joke after all, and we ought to be ashamed of ourselves for treating a lady in such a way. And so the game went on.

It was a swell wedding. The bride wore a veil, and carried a bouquet and all the rest of it, and Dicky was as proud as an officer boy in his first uniform. And away they went with a seven days' pass for the honeymoon. Honeymoons are a mistake, in my opinion. They are part and parcel of the romance and foolishness which go to mislead men and spoil women, by upsetting the standing orders of married life, and interfering with proper discipline and regular meals. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Wren. For a few weeks Dick sailed in sunshine, and then the clouds began to gather. Just how they began to gather he never rightly knew, but they gathered fast, and the wind came out of the east. Mrs. Rolls was not a good-tempered woman. But I didn't think she was very bad-tempered. She was whimsical and fretful. Not a *comfortable* woman. She was vain, too, and fond of dress and theatres ; one of the romantic kind, that want to be fed with compliments and flattery, which are as bad for a woman as toffees are for a child. Dick spoilt her. He put her

upon a pedestal and worshipped her, and, being a woman and not a goddess, she lost her head. Things went on badly with them, and I saw the signs of it. First Dick came seldomer and more seldom to the sergeants' mess, which was bad; then he came oftener and more often, which was worse. And at last he up and told me his marriage was a failure, and he was sick with disappointment.

After talking to him a bit I persuaded him to come and see the sergeant-major, a jolly, stout old bachelor, who understood women as well as he did horses, and had often given good advice to unsuccessful married men.

He was a fine fellow, the sergeant-major, drank twenty glasses of ale every day of his life, could read Latin, and knew Shakespeare better than any soldier I ever met. His favourite amusements were revolver-shooting and swimming. He could swim like a porpoise, and was not unlike one in the water—a great barrel of a man, and I've known him to stop floundering about in the sea for three or four hours at a stretch. The boys used to say he went to sleep there; but you can't believe all you hear.

Well, Dick and I had a cigar with the major, and I told the major that Dick had married a pretty woman who was wearing the soul out of him with everlasting sulks and tantrums.

“Ha!” says the major, “what’s the creature’s pet vice, my boy?” The major always spoke of women as creatures.

“She’s got no vices,” says poor Dick. “She’s a very good wife if”—

“Ha!” says the major,—“a good sort of creature: doesn’t drink, swear, nor chew tobacco. H’m! Does she break delf?”

Dicky said no.

The major laughed. “One of our sergeants,” said he, “married a creature, a very young creature, looked as sweet as candy and as modest as milk, and after marriage she turned out a perfect cat. Poor boy couldn’t come to the mess for a hand at whist but the head was near rowed off him when he went home. You’ll remember her, Wren—Mrs. Dinwiddie, a small creature; face like a flaxen-polled pretty doll, thin lips, and a temper like a parrot. Her vice was delf-breaking. If anything crossed her she used to break the delf. Sometimes she’d shy a cup at Dinwiddie, and then, if he said a back word she’d demolish the whole set, and if he said nothing she’d go into hysterics. At last Dinny came to me. Ha! ha! ‘Go home, my boy,’ I told him, ‘and when she falls to breaking the delf lend her a hand. Smash all there is in the place, and stop it out of her house-keeping money!’ Dinny took the hint.

"He got a supply of whisky into him and went home. 'You've been drinking again, you dog,' says his wife, and heaves a cup at him. 'Yes, I have, you cat,' says he, and fires one at her. Then she gives a scream, and sweeps all the delf off the table, and then he gives a howl, picks up the poker, and clears the chimney-piece at one blow. So she fell into hysterics, and he went back to the mess. But it cured her. She only paid once. Mrs. Rolls doesn't break delf, eh?"

"She does worse," said poor Dick; "she breaks my heart."

The major whistled. "So serious as all that?" said he. "Now, Sergeant Rolls, let me ask you a question or two. Have you always been kind to her?"

Dick said yes.

"Always been generous, bought her things, tried to please her, given her all your pay?"

"Yes, sir, I have," said Dick.

"Ha!" said the major, "but have you been patient, amenable, given her good words for bad, let her see your affection, etc.?"

"Yes, sir," said Dick again.

"That's the trouble," said the major. "You have spoilt her. The creatures are like horses: cannot stand corn. Both need a bridle and a master. If you were blackguard enough to give your wife a beating she'd respect you."

"Perhaps she would," said Dick ; " but I should not respect myself."

" Ha ! " said the major, " that's so. Then I should try jealousy, Ha ! ha ! Go and make eyes at another woman. Stop out late. Show temper at home. There's that grey-eyed daughter, Moggy, the canteen sergeant's wench ; she's been ogling and sighing at you for months, though you haven't noticed her. Get up a strong flirtation. Buy Moggy a brooch, or some of the fal-lals the creatures like. Try that, my boy, and don't neglect your beer."

With that the sergeant-major slapped Dicky on the back, laughed in his jolly way, and said, " If the medicine does not work call on me again. But give it a fair trial. Rub it well in. I know the creatures. You stand on me."

But Dick was too romantic and too gentlemanly to try the major's prescription. He kept on trying kindness, and the breach grew wider. From being cross the wife became insulting. Dick's life was a miserable succession of naggings, rows, sulks, and scenes. He got thin and sullen, then careless. At last he began to drink, and was put on the peg for drunk on duty.

But the adjutant liked Dick and got him off, at the same time giving him good advice. Dick took the advice, and heeded it. For a week or two he kept quite steady, went about his duty in

a soldierly way, and seemed quite cheerful. And then one morning he was absent from seven o'clock parade. The orderly sergeant went to his quarters, but Dick was not there. His wife said he had set off for the parade, and she knew nothing more.

He was gone. He had disappeared without giving a single tip to friend or enemy, and the Death or Glory Boys never set eyes on him again. *Boots !*

CHORUS. *Spurs !*

Wren. Mrs. Rolls was in terrible trouble about poor Dick. For weeks she did nothing but sit in her room and cry. How she cried. She cried all the blue out of her eyes, and all the flesh off her bones. She cried away all her pride and all her prettiness ; but her tears did not fetch back the good husband she'd lost. We were all sorry for her, and did what we could, for she was left with nothing at all to live on. Polly was like a sister to her, and tried to pick her up ; but that was hopeless. For a year she hung about the regiment, doing jobs of needlework, or fine laundry for the officers' wives, and then she gave Dick up and left us. Poor girl ! Before she went she would come sometimes to the sergeants' dances, dressed in black and looking white and wild, but never dancing, and glad enough of a kind word from some of the rough old wives she

used to look down on. Then she went to London, and we lost sight of her. *Boots!*

Andy White. Did you never hear any more of that happy couple, sergeant?

Wren. Well, I'll tell you. Ten years after Dicky vanished we were out in Calcutta, and I went across to the quarter-master of the Munsters to borrow some blank cartridge, and who should the quarter-master be but Dicky Rolls! You could have knocked me down with a small Irish. He knew me directly, and I knew him. He had deserted. Enlisted in the Munsters, gone out to India and got a commission. He was glad to see me, and asked me to his quarters.

"Come with me now, Willy," said he; "it is just our lunch time, and I'll introduce you to my second wife."

"So you are married again?" said I.

"I am," said he, "and I've got the best wife in the world."

"Bar one," said I, and then we both laughed, and I said I was glad to hear of his good luck; "for, to be candid," said I, "your first marriage was a failure."

"Yes," said Dick, "it was a failure." And he sighed so deeply that I changed the subject, for I hate to hurt a man's feelings, and it hadn't been his fault that his wife was a vixen.

Anyhow, we went to Dick's bungalow, and

directly he put his nose under the verandah a tall, handsome lady came sweeping out of the door in a long white dress and, not seeing me, threw her arms round his neck and kissed him, saying, "Dear, dear Dick"—which I consider wasteful, one dear being enough for one husband—"dear, dear Dick, I am *so* glad you have come. The curry is just done to a turn, and"—and then she saw me standing with my mouth open, and she gave a little cry, and I'm jiggered if she wasn't Barbara Rolls, the girl who served in the cigar-shop.

"Why, Dick," said I, "this is"—And I stopped. I was going to say "your first wife." But Dick laughed, and then said quite seriously, "My second wife—Mrs. Fisher. Allow me to introduce you." You see, he had enlisted in a false name. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Wren. Now, isn't that funnier than fiction? Yet it's fact. This wife of his had come out to India as lady's maid to an officer's lady, and the first time she was out in town Dick sees her. So he goes up to her and touches his cap and says, "*Could* you oblige me with a fourpenny cigar, madam?" And the lady screams and faints in his arms.

And then all came out well, and they set up house-keeping again.

Corporal Norris. Then the marriage was a success after all, sergeant?

Wren. Yes. But they had wasted ten years. And I mean to say that waste was all caused by a lot of damned romance and poetry. And their getting over the mischief the romance had done was an accident. See? But that's just as it fell out. And very glad they were to see me, and very nice the lady was. They wanted me to stay to tiffin. But, no. Our own tiffin would be ready, and I wouldn't keep Polly waiting five minutes for her dinner on any account. Poetry is all nonsense, and love is all lies, but dinner's business, and when a man has a wife like mine he can't show her too much respect. That's discipline. However, we all dined together more than once after that, and when the Munsters went up country, both Polly and I were sorry to part with Mrs. Barbara, though we *did* use to call her "dear Lady Disdain."

THE NARROW ESCAPE OF RYAN THE BEAUTY

LANCE-CORPORAL NORRIS'S STORY

THE WEE MON. Wha's the leer the nicht?

Lance-Corporal Norris. You're the only one present, mon, Black; but if you have any taste for facts I'll tell you of the three warnings of Ryan the Beauty, and of the narrow escape he had of becoming respectable.

Andy White. As the Beauty's on guard to-night you may do it safely. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corporal. As you know, boys, the Beauty's not the man to miss his turn for canteen fatigue at this day; but out in India, what with the dryness of the climate and the dryness of Ryan's clay, he had a thirst on him fit to ruin a distillery.

Most of the old Ramchunders could do the manual exercise with a pot pretty creditably when they got a chance, but Bill had a genius. He did not wait for chances; he made 'em. He had a comrade out there named Theophilus O'Meara, who was his only match in the regiment,

and these two drank more liquor and did more punishment than the wildest half-dozen of whites in the station. In India the man who makes a regular business of drinking volunteers for the dead-house, and to the dead-house Shockless—as we called O'Meara—and the Beauty came, but in very different ways. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corporal. We were out at Morar. The health of the station was good, and the two scatter-brains had drunk themselves into the horrors and out of them at least three times in a month. Ryan had been seen under his cot trying to catch blue rats with a basin, and Shockless had been run in for reporting to the officer of the day that the guard-room clock had been talking to him, when a thing happened which we'd been long expecting.

Shockless dropped down in the verandah with heat apoplexy, was carried off to hospital, and died.

The same night Ryan was on hospital guard, and, as luck would have it, got No. 3 post, on the dead-house, his comrade, Shockless, being inside.

All passed quietly until a little after midnight, when the Beauty, who was on the eleven to one relief, was standing at ease in front of his sentry-box, just opposite the dead-house door, and thinking what a jolly pal Shockless had been,

and how short he had been taken. And as he was thinking things over he heard a noise on the dead-house door—tap, tap, tap, very slow and soft.

Ryan opened his eyes and shut his teeth, and the hair of his head, which was cut close to his skull, began to shoot and crackle like the northern lights, for nobody was in the dead-house but the late O'Meara, and the knocking came from *the inside of the door!* *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corporal. "Bad ind to me," says Bill, trying to keep his blood from freezing like water in the mains. "Bad ind to me; but I've got thim agen. I have, man, surely." And with that he pulled himself together, and when the sound on the door came again—"tap, tap, tap!"—he slung his rifle into the shoulder and made a right turn to resume his sentry-go.

But as his heel scrunched the gravel there came a ghostly whistle through the keyhole of the dead-house—"per-swit," and the Beauty halted, and the rory-bory-alis began again under his helmet.

"If that's a rat," says he, "'tis illigantly educated, for the whistle of it does rayzimble"—

"Per-swit, per-swit, per-sweet," went the whistle again, and Ryan's helmet rose up on three hairs.

"The saints be good to me, what is ut?" says Ryan.

Then came answer through the keyhole in the voice of the dead man, "Bill Ryan, Bill Ryan, is it yersilf that's afther spakin'?"

Bill was in a white scare by this, and he ported his arms and let a yell out of him that would have stopped a train, "Howlt!—Who comes *there!*"

Now, the facts of the case were like this. Shockless was only in a trance, and had come to again with the cold in the dead-house, and not knowing that he'd been dead, and finding himself alone in the darkness, concluded that he'd been drunk and was locked up in the cells. When he heard Ryan challenge he knew he must be on sentry, and that confirmed the idea. But of course Ryan thought it was a ghost, and you can tell what a funk he fell into when the corpse began to wheeze through the keyhole. "Bill Ryan. Bill, me jool. For the love o' merrcy give us a chew o' 'bacca, or lave me dhrink through a straw. Shure, I'm perushed wid the cowl'd; an' the mane pigs is afther takin' the clothin' aff me."

And you may guess how astonished Shockless felt when his pal Ryan, thinking of the proper way to address a spirit, said as solemn as a judge in a black cap, "Who arrt thou?"

"Who should I be," says the ghost, "bud poor Shockless O'Mearra," and he shivered in his talk till words came out in little bits, and says he, "Oh! Ryan, avick, the cowl'd, the cowl'd, the cowl'd."

That settled Ryan. With a yell that tore holes in the night he ran off his post, and fell head over tail into the guard-room, like a shell flopping into the gun-room of a ship. Over went the guard-room table, and Jack West, who was drinking hot coffee, fell into the arm rack and emptied his canteen down his own back.

I was corporal of the guard at the time. I hopped off the guard bed, and Ryan falling into my arms and gurgling out, "Save me, corpril,—save me—I've had a warnin'—The dhrrink!—Shockless! me ind is near," went off into convulsions. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corporal. We carried the Beauty off to the hospital, and the sergeant was good enough to say nothing about his having deserted his post. And when we'd seen him in the hands of the doctor I went off to the dead-house with the relief, and there was that daft Shockless kicking the door and howling at the top of his voice, "Tare an' ages! 'Tis freezin' I am. If there's ere a soldier on the guarrd, will he lind me the loan iv me trowsis? Och! Ye spalpeens! is

this the death for a good man to die? Ow! Ow! Ow! Ow!"

Well, when we heard the dead man behaving in this violent and insubordinate way we sat down on the gravel path and laughed till we had the hiccough, and all the while Shockless danced and howled and cursed the sergeant of the guard, and never once guessed that he was a corpse and ought to be behaving with dignity.

But at last we sent a man off to hospital for the key, and I went to the door and said—

"Shockless, you rowdy, for shame! Do you know where you are?"

"Where am I, corpril?" says he.

"Shockless," I said, "you are in the dead-house, poor man."

"I am *not*!" says Shock, with a scream.

"You are," says I; "lie down. You died this morning."

"You're decayvin' me," he says; "I'm alive. So help me, I'm alive."

"You're in the dead-house," I said again, and with that I turned the key and drew him out into the moonlight. "Look at yourself, Private O'Meara," I says, very stern. "Look at yourself in your shroud. Aren't you ashamed of the unseemly way you're behaving?"

When Shockless saw where he was, and what he had on him, he caught hold of the idea, and

went back to his bed in the hospital without a word.

Two days later he and Ryan were discharged to duty, and the same night they drank two bottles of country rum and slept in a water-tank. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corporal. That was the first warning. The second came only a month later. Ryan lay down on his cot in the heat of the day, and just before sundown Shock came into the room and saw his comrade on the broad of his back asleep with his arms folded, and in the fold of his arms, coiled up snug and motionless, was a big wicked cobra capello. Shock stood fast and stared. "'Tis disgustin'," he said. "I have them again. Three days on the stiddy an' seein' snakes!" And he rubbed his eyes, and stared, and rubbed his eyes again.

At the moment in came the orderly sergeant, and, seeing Shock standing in the middle of the floor looking as if he'd been struck so, he followed the direction of his eyes. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corporal. "Don't move, and don't speak," said the sergeant quietly, for *he* understood the danger at once, and knew that the snake was a real one, and would strike Ryan the instant it was disturbed. Shock stood still, wondering if the ser-

geant had got them too. But the sergeant was steady enough. Quick as thought, and as quietly, he stepped to his bunk, got a ball cartridge, slipped it into his rifle, walked on tiptoe close up to the cot, and blew the cobra's head off.

The Wee Mon. Good for him.

Corporal. Yes. It was a sensible trick, and done well. But to have a rifle fired under your chin when you're in a beauty sleep is rather a startler, and Bill Ryan gave such a jump that he nearly knocked his own neck out. He thought at first he was murdered.

But when it had been properly explained to him, and when the sergeant said he hoped it would be a warning, Bill was so thankful and so excited that he borrowed a rupee off the sergeant and went out with Shockless to the canteen, where the story made such an impression that the pair of them got run in for D. in B. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corporal. The third warning came to Ryan in England. It was a year after. We had landed in the Isle of Wight, and the whole corps had been playing ducks and drakes with their savings. Ryan had beaten his record. He had gone out on two days' and three days' absence, and had been brought home one time in a carriage and pair, and one time in a wheelbarrow, and another time on a stretcher. He had mort-

gaged six months' pay in fines, and owed the provost-sergeant forty days' pack-drill, when one night he got invited to a sailors' ball at Ryde, and he broke out of barracks and went.

The sailors did the thing in style. They brought in hot grog in buckets, and drank it out of basins. So Ryan enjoyed himself a treat until about three o'clock in the morning, when he set out to walk to Parkhurst.

For about two miles he advanced in echelon by short rushes, with frequent deployments to both flanks, until, trying to form square at a corner of the cross-roads, his legs fell into disorder and he took cover in a ditch, where he fell asleep.

He would probably be asleep an hour when a cold hand touched his face and woke him. He sat upright, or as upright as he could, and there, just over him, on the brink of the ditch, he saw a white figure suspended in the air, with two white arms making passes at him.

Ryan knew directly that it was a fairy sent to give him a third and last warning. He steadied himself, screwed up his courage, and said, "Mosh worrthy shpirut, what is ut yez come to revale? I'm Bill Ryan; Bill Ryan the — hic — Beauty, an' I'm—hic—'fraid I'm after being the leash thing overtaken—hic—liquor." At this the ghost gave first a hollow laugh and then a long sigh,



“MOSH WORRTHY SHPIRUT, WHAT IS UT YEZ
COME TO REVALE?”

and then he wailed out in a loud voice, "Ochone, —ochone—*och*—one!" And when Ryan heard the wail he knew it was a banshee, and he fell on his knees in the ditch, and began to roar like a bull calf with his tail in a gate.

But immediately afterwards Ginger Smith and Ruggy Brown came along the road and brought him home to barracks. *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corporal. In the morning, as soon as ever he woke, the Beauty got up and went into No. 4 mess to his chum Shockless, and asked for the loan of his Testament.

Shockless was surprised, but he raked out the book from amongst his cleaning traps, and Ryan took it in his hand and said, as sick and solemn as a parson at a hanging, "Shockless," said he, "last night I had a warnin', an', be the same token, 't was the thirrd of 'em, an' the banshee, no less; an' now I'm afther swearrun aff the dhrink, or I'm no better than the chief mourner at me own funeril," and with that he dropped on his knees and kissed the book, and said, "So help me God, I'll never touch another dhrop iv liquor is long 'as me life is sparred; amin."

And Shockless looked very sad, and said he, "The more's the pity, Beauty, but the banshee's a quare crather to play wid, honey," and then he sighed and, laying his hand on Ryan's shoulder,

said, "Be the ways, William, avick, if you could lend me the price of two pennorths o' poipeclay, I'd be obleeged to yez, for 'tis the thirrsty weather." *Boots!*

CHORUS. *Spurs!*

Corporal. Ryan had got a scare that time, and for nearly a week he kept to strict soldiering, and nothing would draw him near the canteen. But one day in came Ruggy Brown and Ginger Smith, and asked him to come out for a drink. Ryan shook his head, and began solemn and slow to tell about the banshee. But Ruggy burst out laughing, and told him he was "in such a disgraceful state that night that he wouldn't have known a banshee from a Punch and Judy show."

"Phwat," said Ryan, "didn't I see um? Didn't I hearr um?"

"Yes," says Ginger, "an' so did we."

"*You* did?" says Ryan.

"Tell him," says Ruggy.

"Why, look here, boys," says Ginger, speaking to the men in the room. "This ignorant soldier had drunk till his eyes stood out of his head like a prawn's. Ruggy and I was passing at the time. There was the Beauty on his knees in a ditch offering up a prayer to a brown donkey with a white face."

"Phwat!" says Ryan.

Ruggy laughed and stamped about, and says,

"That's just all there is to it, and when the ass brayed Ryan dug his nose in the earth and roared out, 'The banshee's wail!—the banshee's wail!'"

Of course, the men laughed at this, and began chaffing Ryan; but the Beauty looked mighty sad and serious, and says he, "The fool that Oi've been; an' me bound fast be me oath, an' the thirrst comin' on me at this momunt loike a hot sun on a dewdhrop." And he heaved a great sigh, and all the fellows roared, and Ruggy offered to stand him a pot there and then if he'd drink it.

But Ryan said, "Me oath; och, man, it's the fool I've been;—me oath." So Ruggy and Ginger went off, and left him standing by the window biting his nails and thinking.

He didn't think long. Before they reached the canteen door he was on them. "Bhoys," says he, "I have ut. Give me two minuts, an' Oi'll be afther drinkin' yer health."

"Right," says Ginger, and away went the Beauty at the double.

It was near upon dinner call, and the men sat waiting for the bugle, when in rushed Ryan, panting like a dog.

"What's the matter, Bill?" says old Parker, and at that moment in came Shockless O'Meara. But Ryan made no answer. He went to his cot, took his Testament down off his shelf, flopped on to

his knees, looked hard at Shockless, and said, "Do yez remember me oath, O'Meara?"

"I do," said Shockless.

"Thin," said Ryan, "this does it," and with that he kissed the book and said, "So help me God, I was only jokin'." *Boots!*

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